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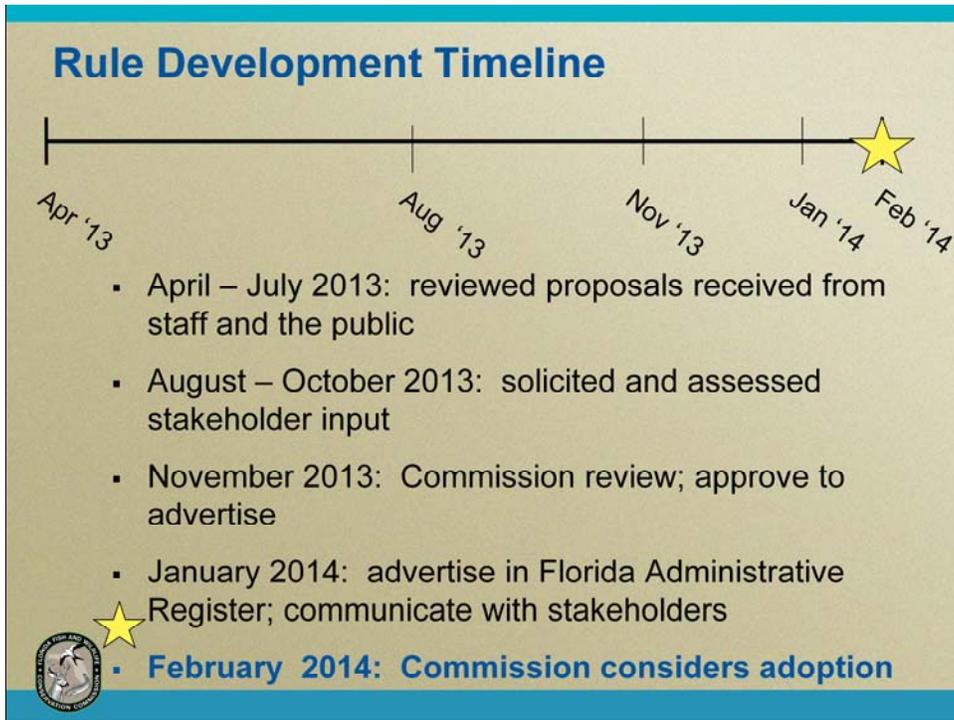
Major Proposed Rule Changes for  
Hunting and FWC-Managed Areas  
Final Public Hearing  
February 2014

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

This presentation covers the major proposed rule amendments related to hunting and to FWC-managed public areas. Full text and summaries of all proposed rule amendments, including nonsubstantive technical changes, annual calendar adjustments, and revisions to rules in response to comments received from the Joint Administrative Procedures Committee, are included in the additional background material.

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FWC staff received approximately 174 requests for changes from the public, staff, and cooperators. Some of these ideas were proposals for change to publications, policies, or other non-rulemaking issues. Staff recommended approximately 96 of the ideas for rule amendments. The public has had an opportunity to directly submit comments to staff online prior to the November and February Commission meetings.

## Adding Opportunity, Flexibility

- Remove restrictions
- Expand hunting opportunities



NWTF photo



- Improve hunter satisfaction
- Encourage hunting



This set of rule proposals follows the Commission's leadership to remove restrictions, increase opportunity, improve hunter satisfaction, and find new ways to encourage people to hunt. Staff relies on this direction and philosophy during its rule development process.

## Statewide Rule Changes



### Wild turkey bag limit – add flexibility

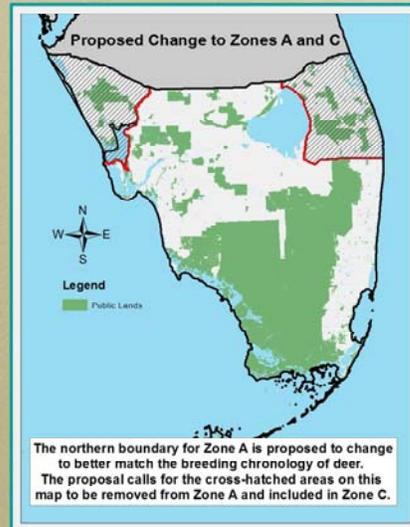
- Current: seasonal bag limit is two birds; daily bag limit is one bird
- Proposed: change daily bag limit to two birds
  - For private lands and public lands not in FWC management-area system

**RULE NO:** 68A-13.004, **RULE TITLE:** Open Season for Taking and Bag Limits for Non-Migratory Game, Issuance of Antlerless Deer Permits and Private Lands Deer Management Permits.

The proposed rule amendment would allow hunters on private land and public lands not otherwise managed under the Commission's wildlife management area system to harvest the seasonal bag limit of two wild turkeys in a single day. The bag limit would remain one turkey per day on wildlife management areas, wildlife and environmental areas and miscellaneous areas to aid in distributing harvest of the turkey resource among different hunters.

Concerns have been expressed by stakeholders that this change could increase bag limit violations and crippling of birds due to hunters attempting to take two birds at a single set-up. Staff has considered these concerns during its review and concluded that this change is expected to result in no significant increase in harvest, crippling loss, or bag limit violations, and no significant decrease in wild turkey populations.

## Statewide Rule Changes



**Zone boundary changes for deer hunting seasons** – to better align with timing of deer breeding and address hunter desires

**RULE NO:** 68A-13.004, **RULE TITLE:** Open Season for Taking and Bag Limits for Non-Migratory Game, Issuance of Antlerless Deer Permits and Private Lands Deer Management Permits.

The proposed rule amendment move portions of Zone A into Zone C to better align with deer breeding chronology and hunter preferences. Fall turkey seasons in the affected area would follow the new zonal seasons. Spring turkey seasons and all seasons for wildlife management areas and wildlife and environmental areas that lie in the proposed area of change would be unaffected by the proposed zonal line change.

This proposed amendment was requested by hunters in the affected areas and is well supported by stakeholders.

## Statewide Rule Changes

### Hunting season for bobcats – extend season to add opportunity

- Current: December 1 through March 1
- Proposed: December 1 through March 31
  - For private lands and public lands not in FWC management-area system



**RULE NO:** 68A-24.002, **RULE TITLE:** Methods of taking Fur-Bearing Animals; Possession; Open Season

The proposed rule amendment would extend the season for harvest of bobcats by the use of guns and dogs only (not traps or snares) through March 31. Currently, bobcats may only be harvested from December 1 through March 1 by the use of live traps, guns, dogs or snares. The proposed rule would not change periods when bobcats may be harvested on Wildlife Management Areas, Wildlife and Environmental Areas and Miscellaneous Areas.

The major source of harvest in Florida is from trapping. Annual fur reports indicate that trapping harvest is very low compared to available estimates of the statewide bobcat population. CITES tags issued for the sale of bobcat furs have ranged from 24 to 191 annually over the last five years, down from an average of 931 during the 1980's. This trend indicates a major decline in trapping activity and mortality. Harvest from hunting is believed to be substantially lower than trapping harvest. The additional days of hunting opportunity likely will contribute inconsequentially to the existing harvest from trapping. This proposed rule change adds hunting opportunity and is expected to have no significant effect on bobcat populations, which are considered abundant and widespread throughout Florida.

## Specific Area Rule Changes

### New Hunting Opportunity

- 29 areas: add hunts, days, species or methods of take to existing hunts, or increase quotas

### Reduced Hunting Opportunity

- 2 areas: reduce hunts, quotas or area; restrict take of certain animals

**Note:** Staff is requesting permission to withdraw the proposed amendment for L. Kirk Edwards WEA



This page and the next summarize 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):** Green Swamp West, Upper Hillsborough, Walk-in-the-Water

**North Central Region (68A-15.062):** Andrews, Cypress Creek, Flying Eagle, Goethe, Gulf Hammock, Jennings Forest, Little River, Mallory Swamp, Potts, Steinhatchee Springs, Twin Rivers; **(68A-17.005):** Watermelon Pond

**Northwest Region (68A-15.063):** Apalachicola, Aucilla, Blackwater, Blackwater Hutton Unit, Box-R, Point Washington; **(68A-17.005):** Apalachicola River, L. Kirk Edwards (Note: Staff has received additional information and stakeholder input on the proposed timing of hunts to coincide with the deer rut on this area. Therefore, staff is requesting permission to withdraw the proposed change to 68A-17.005(3)(c) at this time for further consideration.)

**South Region (68A-15.064):** Fisheating Creek

**Northeast Region (68A-15.065):** Buck Lake, Fort Drum, Lake Panasoffkee, Richloam, Seminole Ranch, Three Lakes Prairie Lakes Unit

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):** Chassahowitzka

**South Region (68A-15.064):** Okaloacoochee Slough

## Specific Area Rule Changes



### Other Rules

- 26 areas: revise rules concerning roads, vehicles, horses, access, check stations, or camping
- 7 areas: adjust hunt types and dates

### Other Rules:

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

**Southwest Region (68A-15.061):** Green Swamp, Green Swamp West, Hickory Hammock, Upper Hillsborough

**North Central Region (68A-15.062):** Big Bend Jena Unit, Big Bend Snipe Island Unit, Big Bend Tide Swamp Unit; **(68A-17.005):** Lafayette Forest

**Northwest Region (68A-15.063):** Blackwater Carr Unit, Box-R

**South Region (68A-15.064):** Dinner Island Ranch, Fishcating Creek, J.W. Corbett, Okaloacoochee Slough, Picayune Strand, Spirit-of-the-Wild; **(68A-17.005):** John G. and Susan H. Dupuis, CREW, John C. and Marianna Jones/Hungryland

**Northeast Region (68A-15.065):** Lake George Dexter/Mary Farms Unit, Lake George, Seminole Forest, Seminole Forest Lake Tracy Unit, Seminole Ranch, Tiger Bay, Triple N, Upper St. Johns River Marsh

Adjust hunt types and dates –

**Southwest Region (68A-15.061):** Green Swamp West

**North Central Region (68A-15.062):** Gulf Hammock

**Northwest Region (68A-15.063):** Apalachicola Bradwell Unit; **(68A-17.005):** L. Kirk Edwards

**Northeast Region (68A-15.065):** Fort Drum, Lake Panasoffkee, Richloam

## Public Input

- Stakeholders notified & comments solicited:
  - Email, phone & online announcement
  - November 2013 Commission meeting
  - Advertisement in Florida Administrative Register
- 96 proposals posted online for comment, Aug. 15 – Oct. 7
- Comments on proposals:
  - Total comments per proposal ranged from zero to 106
  - Only 4 proposals received 10 or more comments (most were supportive)
- Input evaluated & proposals adjusted



### **Stakeholders notified & comments solicited:**

- By email: Email blasts were sent via GovDelivery (FWC's email news group service), and staff sent group emails to known stakeholders and stakeholder groups, who we thought might be interested. Approximately 60,000 individuals were notified by email.
- By phone: Staff made phone calls to known stakeholder leaders, informing them of the proposed changes and where they could make comments.
- By online announcement.
- At the November Commission meeting, where rules were presented to Commissioners for consideration.
- By advertisement in the Florida Administrative Register.

**96 rule proposals were posted online from August 15 – October 7 with instructions and request for public comments.**

### **Public comments on rule proposals:**

- Total comments per proposal ranged from zero to 106.
- Only 4 proposals received 10 or more comments (most were supportive).

**Rule proposals were evaluated and changed in response to public input.**

## Staff Recommendation

- Approval to advertise withdrawing change for L. Kirk Edwards WEA
- Approve the remaining proposed rule amendments for hunting and FWC-managed areas as advertised
- If approved, make rules effective as advertised



If approved, staff will file a “Notice of Change” to advise the public of the change to the language in 68A-17.005(3)(c) which would be to withdraw the proposed rule amendments for L. Kirk Edwards WEA.