

The image is a cover page for a report. At the top center is a photograph of several alligators resting on a muddy bank next to a small pool of water. The alligators are dark grey with lighter-colored scales. The background of the cover is a light beige color. In the bottom left corner, there is a circular logo for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, featuring a deer, a bird, and a fish. To the right of the logo, the title "Alligator Management Rule Changes" is written in a large, black, serif font. Below the title, the date "June 2014" is written in a smaller, black, sans-serif font. At the bottom, the text "Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission" and "Division of Hunting and Game Management" is written in a black, sans-serif font. The entire cover is framed by a blue border.

 **Alligator Management Rule Changes**  
June 2014  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission  
Division of Hunting and Game Management

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is considering adopting changes to seven rules governing its Alligator Management Program. These changes are a product of an ongoing staff review of all of the alligator-related statutes, a stakeholder proposal, and Commission direction.

This background report will detail the final rule amendments for Commission approval and adoption. At their April 2014 meeting, the Commission approved the draft rule amendments for advertising.

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Report date: May 15, 2014

## Process Used

- Draft rules developed in support of possible statute changes, stakeholder input, and Commission direction
  - Direct commenting
  - Webinar
- Draft rules approved for advertising at April 2014 Commission meeting
- Notice of proposed rules posted on MyFWC.com/Alligator
  - Direct commenting



FWC's Alligator Management Standing Team, a diverse group of FWC staff representing all entities within the agency involved in alligator management issues, drafted a set of rule changes to address possible future statutory changes and a stakeholder proposal, and made them available through the MyFWC.com/Alligator website with instructions on how to provide direct input and comments. Staff also hosted a draft rules webinar. The draft rule changes were presented to the Commission at their April 2014 meeting and approved for advertising. Final notices of rule proposals were made available for direct commenting through the MyFWC.com/Alligator website.

Over the next seven pages, each final Commission rule change proposals will be detailed. These are proposed changes to the Florida Administrative Code and not Florida Statutes. Any changes to the Florida Statutes will be contemplated by the Commission at their September 2014 meeting.

## Final Rule: 68A-24.004, FAC

### Fur and Hide Dealers: Operations, Reporting Requirements

- Clarifies that only tagged alligator hides can be purchased
- Adds reporting, record keeping and shipping requirements



The advertised changes to Rule 68A-24.004, F.A.C., would (1) clarify that it is unlawful to purchase untagged alligator hides, that skins of fur-bearing animals possessed on dealer or agent buyer premises must be tagged, and that purchasing records must be kept for a period of one year; (2) establish less burdensome annual reporting requirements, and (3) establish shipping requirements when using a common carrier. The effect of the proposed rule will be to improve understanding of existing provisions, decrease and simplify reporting requirements, codify record keeping and shipping requirements, and make possible the removal of redundant statute provisions in the future . The advertised rule is included in the background materials.

## Final Rule: 68A-25.002, FAC General Provisions for Taking, Possession and Sale of Reptiles

- Adds language regarding the number of participants engaged in the taking of alligators and eggs from the wild
- Clarifies the restriction on crocodylian products manufactured in the form of stuffed animals less than three feet



The advertised changes to Rule 68A-25.002, F.A.C., would establish a provision that the Commission may limit the number of participants engaged in the taking of alligators or their eggs in order to assure the optimal utilization of the alligator resource. The proposed change would also provide for normal taxidermy mounted alligators less than three feet in length. The effect of the proposed rule will be to clarify existing provisions and make possible the removal of redundant statute provisions in the future. The advertised rule is included in the background materials.

## Final Rule : 68A-25.003, FAC

### Taking and Disposal of Nuisance Alligators Statewide

- Removes reference to licensing requirements of contracted nuisance alligator trappers
- Adds language to expend \$5 for every CITES hide tag used on alligator marketing and education activities



The advertised changes to Rule 68A-25.003, F.A.C., would remove the reference to licensing requirements of persons taking nuisance alligators and establish a provision committing expenditures of \$5 on alligator marketing and education activities for each CITES tag used under this rule. The effect of the proposed rule will be to clarify existing provisions, and codify the Commission's existing alligator marketing and education efforts and make possible the removal of redundant statute provisions in the future. The advertised rule is included in the background materials.

## Final Rule: 68A-25.004, FAC Regulations Governing the Operation of Alligator Farms

- Clarifies strength of equivalent fencing materials
- Clarifies housing requirements for farm alligators displayed to the public



The advertised changes to Rule 68A-25.004, F.A.C., would clarify that any fencing materials must be equivalent in strength to 11 ½ gauge chain link and that only farmers who display alligators residing in their permanent enclosures to the public must also conform to the captive wildlife housing requirements. The effect of the proposed rule will be to improve understanding of the rule and decrease burdens on farmers who do not display alligators to the public. The advertised rule is included in the background materials.

## Final Rule: 68A-25.031, FAC

### Regulations Governing Alligator Egg and Hatchling Collections on Lands Not Included in Alligator Management Programs

- Adds language to expend \$1 on alligator marketing and education activities for each egg collected
- Provides for a reduced egg fee in years when no appropriation received



The advertised changes to Rule 68A-25.031, F.A.C., would establish a provision committing expenditures of \$1 on alligator marketing and education activities for each egg collected under this rule. The proposed change also provides for reducing the egg fee by \$1 in years that spending authority for this activity is not granted. The effect of the proposed rule will be to codify the Commission's existing alligator marketing and education efforts and make possible the removal of redundant statute provisions in the future. The advertised rule is included in the background materials.

## Final Rule: 68A-25.032, FAC Regulations Governing the Establishment of Alligator Management Programs

- Adds language to expend \$5 for every CITES hide tag used on alligator marketing and education activities



The advertised changes to Rule 68A-25.032, F.A.C., would establish a provision committing expenditures of \$5 on alligator marketing and education activities for each CITES tag used under this rule. The effect of the proposed rule will be to codify the Commission's existing alligator marketing and education efforts and make possible the removal of redundant statute provisions in the future. The advertised rule is included in the background materials.

## Final Rule: 68A-25.042, FAC Regulations Governing Statewide Alligator Trapping, Permitting, Taking and Sale

- Provides for capture and release of alligators
- Extends hunting hours to 24 hours



The advertised changes to Rule 68A-25.042, F.A.C., would provide for capture and release of alligators only when hand-held snares and snatch hooks are used as capture methods. The proposed rule would also extend the legal hunting hours from 5 p.m. until 10 a.m. to 24 hours each day during the established season. The effect of the proposed changes is to provide greater flexibility for program participation. The advertised rule is included in the background materials.

## Public Input

- General support overall
- Mixed input regarding capture and release and 24-hour hunting (95 persons commented)
  - Many in favor (82 persons)
  - Some opposed (13 persons)



Feedback received, thus far, on the set of rule change proposals has been generally supportive, with significant support for the catch and release and 24 hour hunting provisions. Negative input regarding these two provisions has been expressed, but at a level far less than the support received. Negative concerns have centered around the need for alligators to have a period of time that they are not pursued, conflicts with ecotour operators and other daytime lake users, spoilage of harvested alligators, creating negative perceptions from the on looking public, and injuring alligators.

At the June 2014 Commission meeting, staff will present any additional input received since posting this background report.

## Requested Action

- Approve the proposed amendments to the seven alligator management program rules as advertised
- If approved, rule amendments would become effective as soon as possible after filing (and before 2014 alligator season)

Go to  
[MyFWC.com/Alligator](http://MyFWC.com/Alligator)  
for updates.

