



**Proposed Changes to Deer
Hunting Regulations in Zones A,
B and C**
February 4, 2015
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Division of Hunting and Game Management



The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) implemented a public outreach and input process in 2013 and 2014 in management Zones A, B and C. The goal of this process was to present the concept of Deer Management Units (DMUs) to stakeholders and to receive comments about deer management preferences for the proposed DMUs located in these zones.

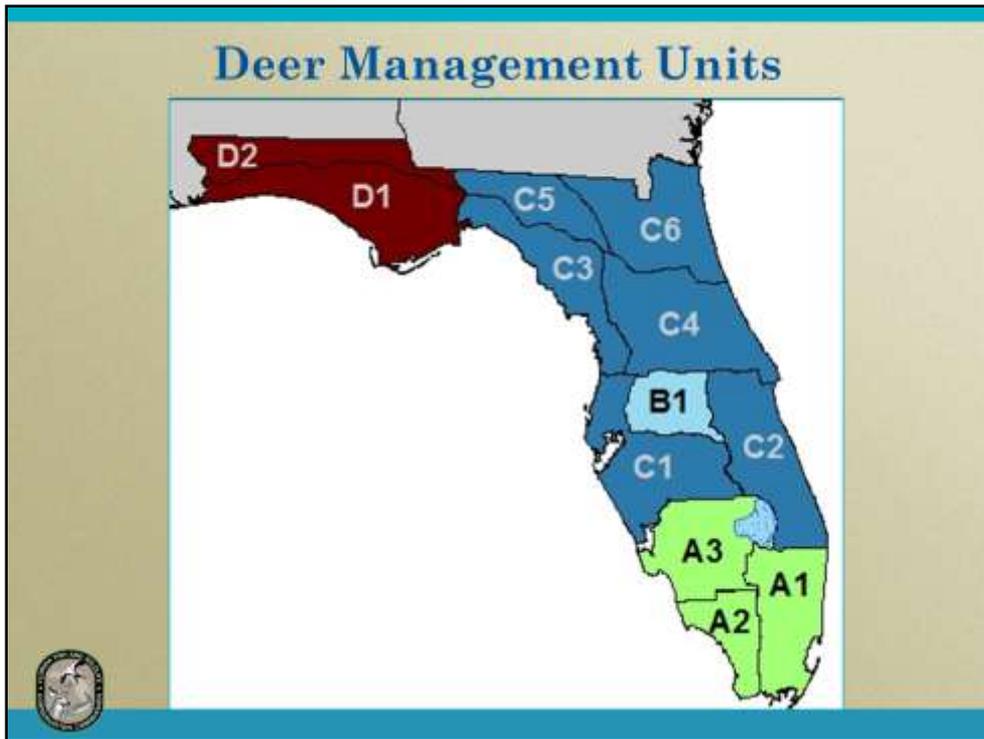
Full summaries of all proposed rule changes, including DMU boundary descriptions, are included in the additional background material.

Deer Management Units: Summary of Proposed Changes to Hunting Regulations

- Greater antler regulations
- Changes to number and timing of antlerless deer days (“doe days”)
- Adjustment to boundary of Zone B



As a result of the public outreach and input process, FWC is considering rule proposals that would (1) implement greater antler regulations, (2) change the number and timing of the antlerless deer days (“doe days”) for the DMUs within Zones A, B and C, and (3) adjust the boundary of Zone B based on recent breeding chronology data and stakeholder input. These proposals are part of a larger project aimed at managing deer at a finer geographic scale with greater stakeholder involvement using DMUs. If approved, the changes would take effect for the 2015-16 hunting season.

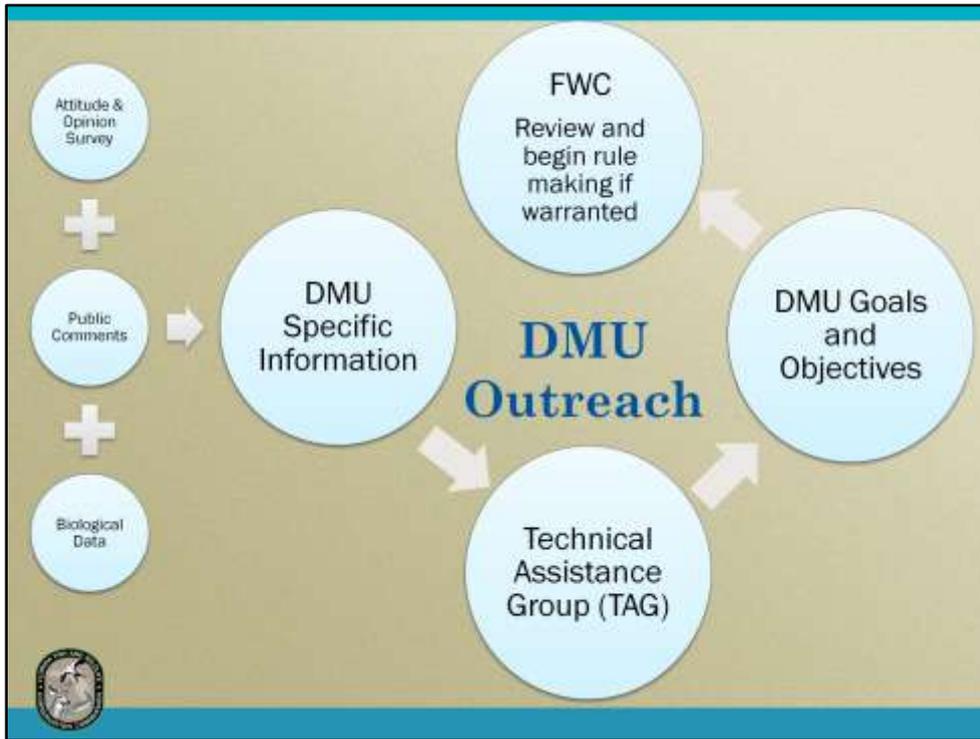


A Deer Management Unit (DMU) is a subdivision of a hunting zone with a unique combination of deer population characteristics, deer habitat, land-use patterns and deer stakeholder interests. Major roads or water features delineate DMU boundaries so hunters can locate boundaries easily in the field.

FWC staff began the DMU process in Zone D, which is located in Florida’s Panhandle and stretches from Tallahassee west to Alabama. The FWC approved new antler regulations and antlerless deer days for Zone D’s two DMUs during the April 2014 Commission meeting. Those changes are in effect for the current 2014-2015 hunting season.

The FWC is now considering changes to antler regulations and antlerless deer take based on stakeholder preferences for the DMUs within Zone A, B and C. In all, there are four zones and 12 DMUs. Changes are being considered for 10 DMUs: three DMUs in Zone A, Zone B is a DMU itself and six DMUs in Zone C. This map shows how Zone B would look if the proposed change to the zonal boundary is approved.

Descriptions for the DMU boundaries are included in the draft rule language provided in the additional background documents.



The DMU management model is based on managing deer with stakeholder input on preferences within each DMU. Season timing would continue to be set for each entire zone, but, within zones, harvest regulations and other management issues may vary at the DMU level. The Deer Management Technical Assistance Group (DMTAG) assisted greatly in the development of the process used to engage the public and develop goals for the DMUs. In addition, DMTAG members helped to refine the DMU map.

To begin the public outreach process, the FWC contracted with Responsive Management, Inc., to conduct a scientifically designed phone survey (commonly referred to as the “phone survey” in this report) of hunters, farmers and residents to assess opinions and attitudes of deer management issues in Florida. There were 4,872 completed surveys statewide, including approximately 200 hunters, 100 farmers, and 100 residents in each DMU.

Normandeau Associates facilitated public outreach via 11 public meetings in Zone A, B and C combined, online webinars, an online presentation and online survey. The online survey could be accessed by anyone through the internet and was intended to get input on preferences for deer management by DMU.

Interested individuals were able to apply at the public meetings or online to be a part of a stakeholder Technical Assistance Group (TAG) to develop goals and objectives for DMUs while considering all public input. TAG had experiences hunting on private and public lands. The TAGs included still hunters and hunters who had experience using dogs to pursue deer. A private consulting firm facilitated the TAG meetings, where goals and objectives for managing the deer population size within each DMU were developed. The TAGs also provided input on other topics, such as antler regulations and bag limits for bucks. FWC staff then reviewed the goals and objectives and developed rule proposals intended to accomplish some of the goals and objectives developed by the TAGs. Some of the goals and objectives can and will be addressed by non-regulatory means.

Proposed Antler Regulations

- Would apply to all lands within a DMU – public and private
- WMAs split by DMU lines would have antler regulations of each respective DMU
- More restrictive WMA regulations already in place would remain
- Would reduce harvest rates initially, but harvest would be expected to increase as buck population increases over the first few years
- Surveys indicate greater antler regulations are linked to increased hunter satisfaction



The proposed DMU-specific antler point regulations (APRs) would apply on all land within each DMU regardless of whether it is privately or publicly owned. This consistency across individual DMUs will help ensure the regulations result in the desired deer population changes and will reduce potential conflicts. If a property is split by a DMU boundary, the property would have 2 different APRs respective to the DMU. If an FWC-managed area currently has a more restrictive APR in place, it would remain.

To manage for more bucks, many hunters and landowners already follow voluntary antler regulations greater than the 5-inch state rule. However, hunters who hunt on small private land tracts often cannot successfully use voluntary antler regulations because the home range size of bucks includes multiple private property parcels owned by different individuals who may have different harvest philosophies. “Tragedy of commons” can result when hunters on small acreage tracts may not pass on a young buck because they are concerned that it will be harvested by another hunter on adjoining land who is willing to harvest young bucks. This scenario is commonly mentioned by hunters hunting on public lands: they are concerned that if they pass up a young buck voluntarily the next hunter may not, and so nothing is gained. Mandatory APRs would increase the buck population and age structure for these scenarios where voluntary actions by hunters would not be effective.

What impact will the APR have on the number of antlered deer harvested?

We expect the antlered deer harvest to decrease initially and then rebound close to current levels after 3-4 years. It is difficult to estimate what the percent decline may be in the first year because many individual hunters, hunt clubs, private landowners and some WMAs already have some form of an antler restriction in place. Antlered deer harvest is currently monitored for each DMU through the existing harvest survey, so FWC will be able to measure and evaluate the impact of any changes on harvest.

Zone A Proposals



DMU A1

- 2 points on one side
- Antlerless harvest by permit only

DMU A2

- 2 points on one side
- Antlerless harvest first 9 days of archery, 2 days during general gun season

DMU A3

- 3 points on one side
- Antlerless harvest first 16 days of archery, 4 days during general gun season

Goals and objectives from the Zone A Technical Assistance Group included (1) implementing an antler regulation to protect 1.5-year-old and younger bucks from harvest while allowing the harvest of older bucks, and (2) increasing the deer population by reducing the antlerless deer (doe) harvest. Most WMAs in Zone A do not allow the harvest of antlerless deer. The proposed changes to antlerless deer take opportunities apply only to private lands.

The current antler regulation proposal calls for a 2 points on one side antler regulation in DMUs A1 and A2 and a 3 points on a side or 10" main beam in DMU A3. The differences among the DMUs are based on habitat productivity and stakeholder preferences. Further, the proposals take into account South Florida's unique dynamics where hydrology, predation and other environmental factors greatly minimize the possibility of high grading or harvesting the larger antlered deer and allowing mostly lesser antlered deer to breed. High grading over extended periods of time can result in declining antler size within a population.

Currently, antlerless deer may be taken on private lands during the 30-day archery/crossbow season, during 7 consecutive days during gun season and by antlerless deer permit. The antlerless deer proposals would eliminate antlerless deer take during the archery/crossbow season and the antlerless deer season during general gun season within DMU A1. For DMU A2, the proposals would allow harvest of antlerless deer during only the first 9 days of the archery/crossbow season and 2 days (Saturday-Sunday) during general gun season. For DMU A3, the proposals would allow harvest of antlerless deer take during only the first 16 days of the archery/crossbow season and 4 days (Friday-Monday) during general gun season. Antlerless deer would remain legal by antlerless deer permit in all DMUs. Antlerless deer regulations for WMAs would remain by area specific regulations.

Zone A Feedback

- Strong support for proposed antler regulations in all DMUs (A1, A2, and A3, 69-72%)
- Support for initial antlerless deer harvest proposal for DMU A1, not for A2 and A3
- A2 and A3 antlerless deer harvest proposals revised with DMTAG input
- All antlerless deer harvest proposals now supported in online poll



Poll Results for Antler Regulations (as of December 29, 2014)

A new online poll was created in December to reflect changes in the original proposals. The proposed antler point regulations received strong support from individuals completing the new online poll. For the 2 points on a side antler regulation in DMU A1, 74% (65 individuals) supported the proposal while 22% (19 individuals) did not support the proposal.

For the 2 points on a side antler regulation in DMU A2, 68% (79 individuals) supported the proposal while 31% (36 individuals) did not support the proposal.

For the proposed 3 points on a side or 10" main beam antler regulation for DMU A3, 61% (122 individuals) supported the proposal while 32% (64 individuals) did not support the proposal.

Poll Results for Antlerless Regulations (as of December 29, 2014)

A new online poll was created in December to reflect changes in the original proposals. The regulation proposal to eliminate antlerless deer take during the archery/crossbow and general gun seasons for DMU A1 was supported by 61% (43 individuals) of the poll participants while 33% (23 individuals) did not support the proposal.

The proposal for DMU A2 to allow antlerless deer take during the first 9 days of the archery/crossbow season and during 2 days (Saturday-Sunday) of the general gun season was supported by 61% (67 individuals) of the poll participants while 36% (39 individuals) did not support the proposal.

The proposal for DMU A3 to allow antlerless deer take during the first 16 days of the archery/crossbow season and during 4 consecutive days (Friday-Monday) of the general gun season was supported by 56% (86 individuals) of the poll participants while 41% (63 individuals) did not support the proposal.

Zone B Boundary Change



- Lands west of Interstate 75 proposed to become part of Zone C (DMU C1)
- This area has earlier rut
- 60% support in online poll



During public opinion surveys and public meetings, significant interest was expressed in changing the boundaries for Zone B so that lands west of Interstate 75 are a part of Zone C (DMU C1). The area of Zone B west of Interstate 75 has an earlier rutting period than the area east of Interstate 75. If this portion of Zone B is included in Zone C (DMU C1) it would have Zone C season dates, which begin approximately one month earlier than Zone B.

Of those individuals that responded to an online poll, about 60% (153 individuals) supported the proposal while 24% (62 individuals) did not support the proposal.

If lands west of Interstate 75 are included into DMU C1, this unit is proposed to have 4 antlerless deer days during general gun season while DMU B1 is proposed to have 3 days. The proposed antler regulation that would prohibit the harvest of antlered deer that do not have at least one antler with three or more points (each point one or more inches in length) OR one antler with at least 10 inches of main-beam is the same for both DMU B1 and C1.

The maps and proposals in the remainder of this report reflect this proposed boundary change for DMUs B1 and C1.

Zone B Proposals



DMU B1

- 3 points on one side or 10" main beam
- Antlerless harvest no change for archery; reduce from 7 to 3 days during general gun season (Friday-Sunday)

Goals and objectives from the Zone B Technical Assistance Group included (1) implementing an antler regulation to protect 1.5 year old and younger bucks from harvest while allowing the harvest of older bucks, and (2) increasing the deer population by slightly reducing the antlerless deer (doe) harvest.

The antler regulation proposal calls for a 3 points on a side or 10" main beam in DMU B1. This would protect 91% of the 1.5 year old age class.

Currently, antlerless deer may be taken on private lands during the 30-day archery/crossbow season, during 7 consecutive days during general gun season and by antlerless deer permit. The antlerless deer proposal would continue to allow the harvest of antlerless deer during all of the archery/crossbow season and would reduce the antlerless deer days during general gun season from 7 to 3 days (Friday-Sunday). Antlerless deer would remain legal to take by antlerless deer permit.

Antlerless deer regulations for WMAs would remain by area specific regulations.

Zone B Feedback

- Strong support for proposed antler regulation in DMU B1
- Support for antlerless deer harvest proposal for DMU B1
- DMTAG members generally supportive



Poll Results for Antler Regulations (as of December 29, 2014)

The proposed antler point regulation received strong support from individuals completing the online poll. For the proposed 3 points on a side or 10" main beam antler regulation for DMU B1, 61% (779 individuals) supported the proposal while 34% (431 individuals) did not support the proposal.

Poll Results for Antlerless Regulations (as of December 29, 2014)

The regulation proposal to allow antlerless harvest during all 30 days of the archery/crossbow season and 3 days during general gun season in DMU B1 to help reduce the number of does being harvested in an effort to stabilize or increase the deer population was supported in the online poll, 52% (440 individuals) supported the proposal while 44% (377 individuals) did not support the proposal.

Zone C Proposals



Antler Regulations

DMUs C1, C2, C4, C5 and C6

- 3 points on one side or 10" main beam

DMU C3

- 2 points on one side



Goals and objectives from the 3 Zone C Technical Assistance Groups included implementing an antler regulation to protect 1.5-year-old and younger bucks from harvest while allowing the harvest of older bucks.

The current antler regulation proposal calls for a 2 points on one side antler regulation in DMU C3 and a 3 points on a side or 10" main beam in DMUs C1, C2, C4, C5 and C6. The differences between the DMUs are based on habitat productivity.

Zone C Proposals



Antlerless Regulations

DMUs C2 and C3

- No change for archery; reduce from 7 to 3 days during general gun season (Friday-Sunday)

DMU C5

- No change for archery, 2 days during muzzleloading gun and 4 days during general gun season

DMUs C1, C4 and C6

- No change for archery; reduce from 7 to 4 days during general gun season (Friday-Monday)



The goals and objectives for DMUs C1, C2, C3, C4 and C6 from the Technical Assistance Groups included maintaining or increasing the deer population by slightly reducing antlerless deer take opportunities. The proposals for the DMUs with Zone C would still allow antlerless deer to be harvested during the archery/crossbow season but would reduce the antlerless deer season during the general gun season from 7 to 3 days (Friday-Sunday) in DMUs C2 and C3 and from 7 to 4 days (Friday-Monday) in DMUs C1, C4 and C6. Antlerless deer also could still be harvested by antlerless deer permit.

The goals and objectives for DMU C5 from the Technical Assistance Group included (1) maintaining the population at current densities and (2) spreading out the antlerless deer season over multiple weekends while avoiding an increase in the overall doe harvest. The proposal would continue to allow antlerless deer to be harvested during the archery/crossbow season but would reduce the antlerless deer season during general gun season from 7 consecutive days to 6 days on weekends, 2 weekends during general gun season (Saturday-Sunday) and 1 weekend during muzzleloading gun season (Saturday-Sunday). Antlerless deer could still be harvested by antlerless deer permit.

Antlerless deer regulations for WMAs would remain by area specific regulations.

Zone C Feedback

- Strong support for proposed antler regulations in DMUs C1, C2, C3, C5
- Moderate support for proposed antler regulations in DMUs C4 and C6
 - Not well supported by Ocala WMA hunters (DMU C4)
- Strong support for antlerless deer harvest proposal in DMU C5
- Less than majority support in other DMUs



Poll Results for Antler Regulations (as of December 29, 2014)

The proposed antler point regulations received strong support from individuals completing the online poll for DMUs C1, C2, C3 and C5. For the 3 points on a side or 10" main beam antler regulation in DMU C1, 59% (329 individuals) supported the proposal while 36% (201 individuals) did not support the proposal. In DMU C2, 65% (672 individuals) supported the proposal while 31% (315 individuals) did not support the proposal. For the 2 points on one side antler regulation proposal for DMU C3, 66% (1,021 individuals) supported the proposal while 31% (483 individuals) did not support the proposal. For the 3 points on a side or 10" main beam antler regulation in DMU C4, 52% (1,111 individuals) supported the proposal while 44% (939 individuals) did not support the proposal. For the 3 points on a side or 10" main beam antler regulation in DMU C5, 67% (488 individuals) supported the proposal while 29% (209 individuals) did not support the proposal. For the 3 points on a side or 10" main beam antler regulation proposal in DMU C6, 57% (945 individuals) supported the proposal while 38% (633 individuals) did not support the proposal.

While there was support for the proposed 3 points on a side or 10" main beam antler regulation proposal for DMU C4, there was less support for the proposal among DMU C4 hunters that indicated they frequently hunt Ocala WMA, 40% (300 individuals) supported the proposal while 55% (419 individuals) did not support the proposal.

Poll Results for Antlerless Regulations (as of December 29, 2014)

A new online poll was created in December to reflect changes in the original proposals. The regulation proposal to reduce the antlerless deer season during general gun season from 7 days to 4 days in DMU C1 was supported by 42% (67 individuals) of the poll participants while 56% (90 individuals) did not support the proposal.

For DMU C2, the proposal to reduce the antlerless deer season during general gun season from 7 to 3 days was supported by 45% (118 individuals) of the poll participants while 49% (129 individuals) did not support the proposal.

For DMU C3, the proposal to reduce the antlerless deer season during general gun season from 7 to 3 days was supported by 42% (188 individuals) of the poll participants while 53% (236 individuals) did not support the proposal.

For DMU C4, the proposal to reduce the antlerless deer season during general gun season from 7 to 4 days was supported by 41% (243 individuals) of the poll participants while 53% (314 individuals) did not support the proposal.

For DMU C5, the proposal to reduce from 7 consecutive days to 6 days on weekends (4 days with Saturday/Sunday format during general gun season and 2 days with Saturday/Sunday format during muzzleloading gun season) was supported by 58% (140 individuals) of the poll participants while 38% (92 individuals) did not support the proposal.

For DMU C6, the proposal to reduce the antlerless deer season during general gun season from 7 to 4 days was supported by 40% (189 individuals) of the poll participants while 57% (273 individuals) did not support the proposal.

Proposed Regulations - General

- **Youth exemption:** Hunters under 16 years of age would be exempt from greater antler regulations; may harvest bucks with antlers 5" or greater in length
- **Wildlife Management Areas:**
 - Antler regulations would apply to all WMAs within each DMU. (Some WMAs currently have more restrictive APRs in place, which would remain.)
 - Antlerless deer days would not apply to WMAs. Antlerless harvest is governed by area-specific rule, and only a few WMAs are proposed to change at this time



A youth exemption applies for all DMUs so that youth under 16 years of age may harvest any antlered deer.

Public Feedback

- **Antler regulations:**
 - Supported by a majority of hunters responding to polls for each DMU
 - Some support for a season limit on the number of smaller-antlered deer youth may take
- **Antlerless deer seasons:**
 - Supported by a majority of hunters responding to polls for DMUs in Zone A and B and DMU C5
 - Not supported by a majority of poll respondents for DMUs C1, C2, C3, C4, and C6



The original antlerless deer season proposals were supported in 3 of 10 DMUs in the online poll. The 7 that did not have initial support were change based on the poll results with input from DMTAG. An extra day was added to the antlerless deer season during the gun season in each of these DMUs. A majority of individuals responding to the online polls did not support the antlerless deer season proposals in DMUs C1, C2, C3, C4 and C6. However, a reduction in antlerless deer take, particularly does, is needed to accomplish the goals and objectives developed by the stakeholder groups and to possibly avoid an increase in doe harvest as is common in areas when greater antler regulations are implemented. These adjusted proposals were presented at the November Commission meeting as draft proposals.

Staff Recommendation

- Approve the proposed rule amendments for DMUs in Zones A, B and C:
 - Changes to antlerless deer seasons
 - Greater antler regulations to protect young bucks
- Approve notice of change to adjust Zone B and C boundary
- If approved, make rules effective July 1, 2015

Go to
MyFWC.com/Deer
for updates



Approval of Rule 68A-13.0001, FAC establishing zones and DMUs as advertised with the exception of the boundary adjustment between zones B and C as described by staff.

Approval to file a Notice of Change to Rule 68A-13.0001, FAC adjusting the boundary between Zone B and C and adjusting the DMU C1 boundary.

Approval of Rule 68A-13.004, FAC as advertised establishing antlerless deer seasons and antler regulations.

Approval of Rules 68A-15.061, 68A-15.062, 68A-15.063, 68A-15.064, 68A-15.065 and 68A-17.005 as advertised establishing antler regulations on specific wildlife management areas and wildlife and environmental areas.

Make rules effective July 1, 2015.

Backup Material

The following slides are considered backup material and are not anticipated to be part of the actual presentation to the Commission.



TAG Goals and Objectives

- **All DMUs:** Antler regulation that protects most 1.5-year-old bucks while allowing harvest of most bucks at least 2.5 years old
- **DMUs A1, A2 and A3:** Increase deer population by reducing antlerless deer (doe) take
- **DMUs B1, C1, C2, C3, C4 and C6:** Maintain or increase deer population by slightly reducing antlerless deer take
- **DMU C5:** Maintain deer population and spread out antlerless deer days to increase chances of hunters being able to hunt 1 or more days



The Technical Assistance Groups (TAGs) developed a number of goals and objectives for each DMU. A common goal or objective of all TAGs was for greater antler regulations to protect 1.5 year old bucks from harvest while allowing the harvest of bucks 2.5 years old or older. Antler regulation proposals vary by DMU based on biological data and hunter preferences.

The TAGs also developed goals and objectives related to the overall deer population within each DMU, specifically, whether the deer population should be increased, decreased or maintain at current levels based on stakeholder preferences. The Zone A TAG wanted to increase the deer population by reducing antlerless deer take (DMUs A1, A2 and A3). Other TAGs expressed a preference to maintain or increase the deer population by slightly reducing antlerless deer take (DMUs B1, C1, C2, C3, C4 and C6). The TAG for C5 wanted to maintain the deer population at current levels and spread out antlerless deer days to increase chances of hunters being able to hunt 1 or more days.

While these goals and objectives are being addressed by the proposed harvest regulation changes, other TAG goals and objectives will be considered as part of the FWC's nonregulatory efforts to manage deer at the DMU level. The full report from each TAG is available at MyFWC.com/deer.

Antlerless Deer Management Caution is Warranted

- Managing deer population size is primary purpose for DMUs
- Deer habitat and harvest rates vary by DMU...some are less productive, impacting reproduction, growth, survival and the number of deer supported by the land (biological carrying capacity)
- Florida has lower deer densities and reproductive potential than other states; thus care must be taken to avoid over-harvest of does



The harvest of female deer (does) is used to manage deer population size. If the deer population is greater than what the habitat can support, available food resources are less than optimal. Harvesting does can help keep a deer population from exceeding available resources or reduce a population if it already exceeds this threshold. When the deer population size does not exceed available resources, little or no doe harvest is necessary to manage herd properly. Deer populations in Florida are considered to be below biological carrying capacity. However, in some areas, deer populations may be close to exceeding levels the public will tolerate; this is commonly referred to as the social carrying capacity. Harvest of does is the primary method for controlling deer densities. Harvesting does can be used to alter buck to doe ratios (the number of does per buck) and to adjust the deer population size to be in balance with the habitat or public preferences. Harvesting too many does can reduce the population below desired levels, which will reduce future harvest potential and likely decrease hunter satisfaction.

Doe harvest is managed using antlerless deer harvest opportunities. Because public hunting areas often receive a high level of hunting and harvest pressure compared to private lands, antlerless deer regulations on public lands are more conservative to maintain desired deer populations and hunter satisfaction. Wherever possible, the FWC allows some limited take of antlerless deer to provide hunter opportunities for harvest. An antlerless deer is any deer (except spotted fawns) without antlers or with antlers less than 5 inches in length. Antlerless deer harvest opportunities are important to hunters, particularly for youth (hunter recruitment), and can increase hunter satisfaction.

Buck Management

- **Current approach:** Managed for maximum sustained yield; allows the harvest of 1.5-year-old and older bucks; conservative doe harvest
- **Proposed alternative:** Managed to allow more bucks to persist into older age classes; protects younger bucks (1.5-year-old and younger) from harvest
 - **Purpose:** Increase buck population, improve buck to doe ratio, increase chances of seeing and harvesting larger-bodied and larger-antlered deer



In Florida, hunters currently may harvest up to 2, 5-inch antlered deer per day with no season bag limit. The goal for antler regulations proposed for the DMUs within Zones A, B and C and already in place in other states is to protect the majority of 1.5-year-old bucks while allowing the harvest of the majority of 2.5-year-old and older bucks.

Current approach for managing bucks (male deer) in Florida – Regulations allow bucks to be managed for maximum sustained yield which allows the harvest of 1.5-year-old and older bucks while protecting or allowing only a conservative harvest of female deer to ensure young bucks are available each year for hunters to harvest.

An alternative approach is to protect young bucks (1.5-year-old and younger) from harvest allowing more bucks to persist into older age classes and resulting in more balanced deer herds (more bucks in older age classes and an increase in the ratio of bucks to does in the population). Depending on the deer population size and goals for future population size, does may or may not be allowed to be harvested with this approach. Restricting the harvest of most 1.5-year-old and younger bucks can increase the deer population as the buck population grows, but doe harvest is the primary driving force of population growth. This alternative approach is not trophy deer management, which usually entails protecting bucks from harvest until they reach their maximum antler potential around 4.5 to 6.5 years of age.

Antler Point Regulations (APRs) can be used for manipulating population size, age structure and buck to doe ratios. The current, longstanding approach to buck management has allowed the statewide deer population to increase over time, but the approach can lead to unbalanced sex ratios and few older bucks in the population. Many private land parcels are managed for older bucks, and a number of WMAs also have APRs in order to increase the buck population.

Proposed Antler Regulations

- **Purpose:** increase buck population, improve buck to doe ratio, increase chances of seeing and harvesting larger-bodied and larger-antlered deer
- Percent of each age class that would be protected from harvest by the proposed APRs (based on data collected from WMA check stations within each DMU):

DMU	A1	A2	A3	B1	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
% of 1.5 age class protected by ARs	55%	70%	76%	91%	80%	85%	77%	88%	NA	88%



For an APR to be effective across the landscape and to reduce potential conflicts, the proposed DMU specific APRs would apply on all land within each DMU regardless of whether it is privately or publicly owned. If a property is split by a DMU boundary, the property would have 2 different APRs respective to the DMU. If an FWC-managed area currently has a more restrictive APR in place, it would remain.

Many hunters already follow voluntary antler regulations greater than the 5-inch state rule to manage for more bucks. However, lots of hunters hunt on small private land tracts, and cannot successfully use voluntary antler regulations because the home range size of bucks includes multiple private property parcels owned by different individuals that may have different harvest philosophies. “Tragedy of commons” also comes into play in that hunters on small acreage tracts may not pass on a young buck because they are concerned that it will be harvested by another hunter on adjoining land who is willing to harvest young bucks. This scenario is also commonly mentioned by hunters hunting on public lands concerned that if they pass up a young buck voluntarily the next hunter may not. Mandatory APRs would increase the buck population and age structure for these scenarios where voluntary actions by hunters likely would not work..

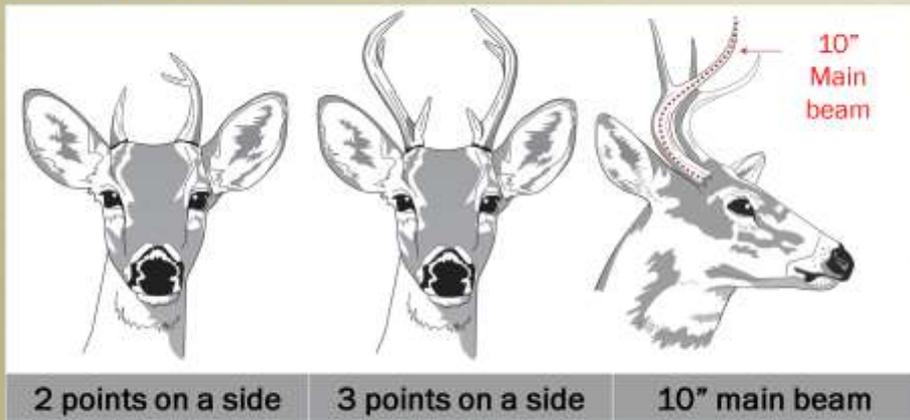
What impact will the APR have on the number of antlered deer harvested?

We expect the antlered deer harvest to decrease initially and then rebound close to current levels after 3-4 years. It is difficult to estimate what the percent decline may be in the first year because many individual hunters, hunt clubs, private landowners and some WMAs already have some form of an antler restriction in place. Antlered deer harvest is currently monitored for each DMU so we will be able to determine the impact of any changes on harvest.

What proportion of each age class will be protected by the proposed APR?

The table shows the estimated percent of bucks by age class that would be protected from harvest under the proposed APR for each DMU. These estimates are based on harvest data collected from check stations throughout each DMU.

Examples of Legal Deer Under the Proposed Antler Regulations



Here are examples of legal antlered deer under the proposed antler regulations with the 10 inch main beam option on the far right.

This alternative approach **is not** trophy deer management, which generally entails protecting bucks from harvest until they reach their maximum antler potential around 4.5 to 6.5 years of age.

Current Harvest Regulations

- 128-day season. Includes archery, crossbow, muzzleloading gun and general gun seasons
 - Dogs can be used to pursue deer only during general gun season
- Daily bag limits:
 - Muzzleloading gun, general gun and a portion of crossbow season: Antlered deer only, 2 per day (5" minimum antler)
 - Archery/crossbow season – any deer (except spotted fawns), 2 per day
- 7 days of antlerless deer season during general gun
- WMA's more restrictive
 - Shorter seasons
 - Quotas on some
 - Bag limits on many
 - Some allow use of dogs (restricted as to where and when)



Antlerless deer may be taken on private lands during the archery/crossbow season, during the general gun season's antlerless deer days, by antlerless deer permit, private land deer management permit and with deer depredation permits. More conservative on public lands.



A number of states, including Florida (on WMAs), use APRs to accomplish certain buck harvest goals. Georgia allows the harvest of 2 antlered deer annually and one must have at least 4 points on a side (note: all antlered deer harvested must have 4 points on a side in 7 counties or a 15 inch outside spread in 2 counties); Alabama has a season bag limit of 3 deer, one of which must be at least 4 points on one side; Mississippi has a season bag limit of 3 antlered deer and they must have a minimum of a 10-inch inside spread or main-beam length of 13 inches or more; and Arkansas has a season bag limit of 2 antlered deer with a minimum of 3 points on one side.