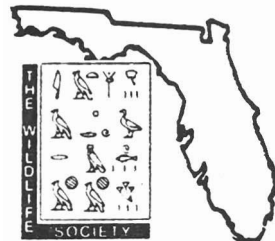


FLORIDA CHAPTER THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY



1807 NW 39th Terrace
Gainesville, FL 32605
15 January 1986

Larry Martin, Regional Director
Northeast Region
Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission
Route 7, Box 440
Lake City, FL 32055

Dear Larry:

The Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society has reviewed the proposed 1986-87 changes in hunting and fishing regulations and we sincerely appreciate the opportunity for input.

In general, the rule changes make good sense and we, as professional wildlife biologists, are supportive of them. We were particularly pleased with the following changes listed:

- a) Item 8 - Prohibiting the taking of gopher tortoises in the three National forests.
- b) Item 10.B.3 - Providing for vital data collection at check stations in the Osceola National Forest.
- c) Item 10.C.1.b - Delaying the bear season in the Apalachicola National Forest until later to make female bears less vulnerable to hunting.

We support your efforts! If we may be of further assistance, do not hesitate to contact me.

Best Regards,

Wayne R. Marion
President

WRM/bf

cc: Executive Board

Wayne - R4I - L. 1/3/86

FLORIDA GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMMISSION

THOMAS L. HIRES, SR. WILLIAM G. BOSTICK, JR. C. TOM RAINEY, D.V.M. J.H. BAROCO MRS. GILBERT W. HUMPHREY
Chairman, Lake Wales Vice-Chairman, Winter Haven Miami Pensacola Miccosukee

ROBERT M. BRANTLY, Executive Director
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NORTHEAST REGION
Route 7, Box 440
Lake City, Florida 32055
(904) 752-0353

December 11, 1985

Dear Conservationists:

This is the second year the Commission has utilized an improved method of seeking public comments relative to proposed regulation changes. We are also beginning the rule-making process earlier this year in an endeavor not only to improve our procedure, but to produce a better finished product.

Last year, under the new system, we received excellent results easily surpassing our historical method of holding public meetings throughout the State. We not only received more public input, but the fact that your suggestions were provided in writing greatly clarified your thoughts and concerns for us. Where special circumstances dictate we occasionally utilize the public meeting forum, but it is now just one of several actions which make up the revised public input format.

Enclosed for your review is a copy of the Commission staff's proposed changes for the 1986-87 season. We, once again, are encouraging you to bring these proposals before your group's membership and provide a summary of comments that represent the consensus of the group.

Your comments should be returned no later than January 15, 1986. While we will be unable to provide responses to each group's comments, please be assured all comments will be considered in making final rule change proposals to the Commission on March 14, 1986. The public is welcome to address the Commission and staff regarding any proposed rule at the staff workshop on January 23 or Commission meeting on January 24. Final adoption of the rules will take place at the March 14 Commission meeting.

Sincerely,

Regional Director

LM:cvs
Enclosure

PROPOSED 1986-87 REGULATION CHANGES

1. Extend the steel shot zone in Dade and Broward counties to include that portion of Palm Beach County lying within Everglades Conservation Area 2: This action would establish all of Conservation Area 2 as a nontoxic shot zone. Conservation Area 2 waterfowl have high rates of lead ingestion including that portion in Palm Beach County. The Palm Beach-Broward County line, which is the present nontoxic shot boundary, is unposted making compliance as well as enforcement difficult.
2. Authorize permitted wholesale meat dealers and retailers (in addition to alligator farmers and agent-trappers) to sell lawfully produced alligator meat: Provided that alligator meat shall remain in original cartons until the meat is prepared for consumption or processing. This proposal would permit resale of alligator meat and would expedite the transfer of alligator meat to consumers.
3. Okecheelee Fish Management Area: This action opens this area, which is located in West Palm Beach, to public fishing. It also prohibits the use of gasoline motors and the harvest of largemouth bass on the area.
4. Lake Okeechobee Haul Seine Permits: This action deletes the section that provides that a Lake Okeechobee haul seine permittee may designate a beneficiary of the permit from among his surviving spouse or lineal descendants. In the future, when a Lake Okeechobee haul seine permit becomes available as a result of the death of a haul seine permittee, the Lake Okeechobee haul seine permit will be issued to the first person on the Commission's Lake Okeechobee haul seine waiting list. This list was established based on the first-come, first-served status of haul seine permit applicants.
5. Allow for archery hunting in previously closed areas of Dade, Broward and Hendry counties: These areas were originally closed to archery hunting due to perceived problems with airboaters. It is now considered to be an unnecessary restriction.
6. Expand season and area for taking suckers in Northwest Region: Deletes previously closed waters in various counties and lengthens previous season of November-April to September-May.
7. Liberalize the taking of catfish and tilapia: Allows the taking of catfish during daylight hours beginning July 1986 by spears, gigs, snatch hooks and crossbow. These methods are currently unlawful. This rule also provides for taking of tilapia in the Central Region beginning July 1987 by cast nets.
8. Prohibit the taking of gopher tortoises on Apalachicola, Osceola and Ocala National Forests: The gopher tortoise occurs essentially in sandy-soil habitats of Florida. These habitats are rapidly being destroyed by development. At the same time, much of the remaining gopher habitat is being closed to gopher hunters resulting in a concentration of gopher

hunting on public lands. Tortoise colonies on Apalachicola and Ocala have been reduced to critical levels and Osceola has limited gopher habitat. This proposal would prohibit taking of gophers on the three major national forests and allow those colonies to recover.

9. Proposed quota hunt changes:

- A. Reduce 9-day quota on Apalachicola Wildlife Management Area from 7,000 to 5,000. The original (7,000) quota was based on an overestimate of huntable acreage.
- B. Increase the number of days antlerless deer may be taken on the G. U. Parker Wildlife Management Area from one day to two days. This would permit more antlerless deer to be taken and improve herd management capabilities. Antlerless deer permits would still be issued from the Commission's Tallahassee office.
- C. Increase the quota on the still hunt portion of the Nassau Wildlife Management Area from 400 permits authorized in 1985-86 to 650 still hunt permits in 1986-87. The still hunt area increased in size approximately 1,600 acres in 1985-86 to include the area south of ALA. Decrease the quota on the dog hunt area from 800 permits authorized in 1985-86 to 500 dog hunt permits in 1986-87. The dog hunt area decreased in size 13,400 acres in 1985-86 and a quota adjustment is being made for 1986-87.

10. Proposed changes on Type I wildlife management areas:

A. South Region:

- 1. Chassahowitzka (new area): Proposed regulations for the area include at least a one-season closure on hunting with only fish and frogs legal to take. Access would be limited to pedestrians only; no camping.
- 2. Green Swamp: Would establish a zone system to distribute hunters and hunting pressure more evenly. Zone tags would be issued first come, first served at the checking stations. Hunters can only hunt in the zone for which they hold a tag.
- 3. Upper Hillsborough: Would extend the period that persons may camp on the area to include the spring turkey season.
- 4. Webb:
 - a. Allow hog and deer hunting only during November 1 through 9.
 - * Open the 1986 small game season at the traditional time (November 15). This change is proposed to deal with the problem of the 500-person quota being exceeded during the first nine days, since quota permittees as well as persons buying a \$10.00 daily permit may now enter the area.

Separating the deer-hog season from the small game season would prevent this.

- b. Close the quail season February 15 instead of March 8 to avoid disruption of early quail nesting and production.

B. Northeast Region:

1. Camp Blanding: Eliminate the archery hunt in the Cantonment Unit to avoid conflicts with military activities on interior roads of the area.
2. Gulf Hammock: Close the Maple Ridge Road access point. Two access points still exist; one point is less than a mile from Maple Ridge Road.
3. Osceola: Require the mandatory checking of all game taken at Commission-operated or auxiliary check station before being removed from the area. This proposed rule is to allow the collection of additional biological data on game taken from the area, primarily deer. This action would provide vital information to the Commission in order to assess reasons for the decline in the Osceola deer herd.
4. Cary (new area): Establish a new wildlife management area with five 2-day archery hunts.
5. Aucilla: Establish an either-sex archery hunt south of U.S. 98 and west of the Aucilla River from October 4 through October 19. This proposal will eliminate the present system of issuing antlerless deer permits to hunters and achieve the necessary antlerless deer harvest by allowing archers to take deer of either sex during the archery season.

C. Northwest Region:

1. Apalachicola:

- a. Delay the September 6-21, 1986 bear-dog training season and combine it with the October 13 - November 2, 1986 deer-dog training season. This proposal would allow both bear and deer dogs to be trained during the same time period rather than the two separate training periods that presently exist. Would also move the bear-dog training period closer to the proposed new bear season.

Delay the 1986 bear season from September 28 through October 20 to December 1 through December 20. This would provide more protection to females and make males relatively more vulnerable. Females begin denning earlier than males and would be encountered less with a later season. Bear harvests are expected to increase if this change is adopted.

2. Ed Ball:

Provides for increased public use on previously closed portions of Ed Ball WMA. Previously, fishing was restricted to a short season in May and June. This provides for year-round fishing, except in St. Joe Paper Company canal, and removes vehicle restrictions south of Depot Creek.

D. Everglades Region:

1. Holey Land:

- a. The South Florida Water Management District has requested camping be prohibited on the L-23 levee (Miami Canal) so construction equipment can have free access along it. Camping will still be allowed on the L-5 levee.
- b. Eliminate the provision for a 1-day antlerless deer harvest. Prior to 1985-86, antlerless deer could not be taken on the Holey Land. As a part of the Holey Land wetlands restoration project, the deer populations that exist following restoration are to be compared to populations that occurred prior to restoration. As part of this comparison, we wish to use deer harvests and, since antlerless deer hunting was not done in years prior to restoration, it is necessary to not have such hunts following restoration if pre- and post-comparisons are to be valid.

2. Corbett:

Deletes an unnecessary rule restricting vehicles to designated roads during archery and muzzleloading season on Corbett WMA.

E. Central Region:

1. Seminole Ranch:

- a. Change the small game season from January-February to November-December. This proposal would allow small game hunters to hunt small game when animals are more numerous.
- b. Allow frogging. Fishing is already allowed. This action would expand recreational opportunity in this area.
- c. Prohibit the use of all all-terrain cycles (in addition to current prohibition on tracks, motorcycles and airboats). The small size of this area precludes the need for ORVs.

2. Tosohatchee:

Allow a spring turkey season of three 3-day hunts. A huntable population of turkeys exist on the area. This proposal would allow additional hunting opportunity for that resource. Turkey hunting would not be permitted in the fall.

11. Proposed changes for Type II wildlife management areas:

St. Johns Water Management District Lands: Allow the taking of migratory birds only in the area south of Fellsmere Grade.

12. Proposed changes for wildlife and environmental areas:

East Everglades: This proposal would establish rules for a new area. Hunting would be allowed during statewide open seasons, except that the area south of S.R. 27 is closed. Airboats would be permitted north of S.R. 27. Wheeled and tracked vehicles, and airboats would be prohibited south of S.R. 27. Outboard motors would be allowed in the C-111 canal.

Proposed
1986-87 Resident Game Season Dates and Bag Limits

<u>Species</u>	<u>Northwest Region</u>	<u>Other Regions</u>	<u>Bag Limits</u>	
			<u>Daily</u>	<u>Season Possession</u>
Deer*, antlered	Nov. 15 - Jan. 25	Nov. 15 - Jan. 11	2	3
Wild Hog	Nov. 15 - Jan. 25	Nov. 15 - Jan. 11	1	2
Turkey	Nov. 15 - Jan. 11		1	2
Turkey-Gobbler (Spring Season)	Mar. 21 - Apr. 26		1	2
Quail	Nov. 15 - Mar. 8		12	24
Squirrel	Nov. 15 - Mar. 8		12 gray 2 fox	24 gray 4 fox
Rabbit	Open year-round		12	24
Bear**		Nov. 15 - Jan. 11	(Limit one per hunter)	

* Deer of either sex may be taken statewide November 29-30.

** Bear may be taken only in Columbia and Baker counties.

Special Seasons:

Archery	Oct. 4 - Nov. 2 (north of S.R. 72 to Arcadia and S.R. 70 to Fort Pierce) Sept. 6 - Oct. 5 (south of S.R. 72 to Arcadia and S.R. 70 to Fort Pierce)	All game listed in the "Species" column above may be taken during this special archery season--same bag limits apply.
Muzzleloading Gun	Nov. 7 - Nov. 9 (all regions)	All game listed in the "Species" column except turkey and bear may be taken during this special season--same bag limits apply.
Archery/Muzzle- loading Gun	Feb. 7 - 22 (Northwest Region)	All game listed in the "Species" column above except turkey and bear may be taken during this special season--same bag limits apply.