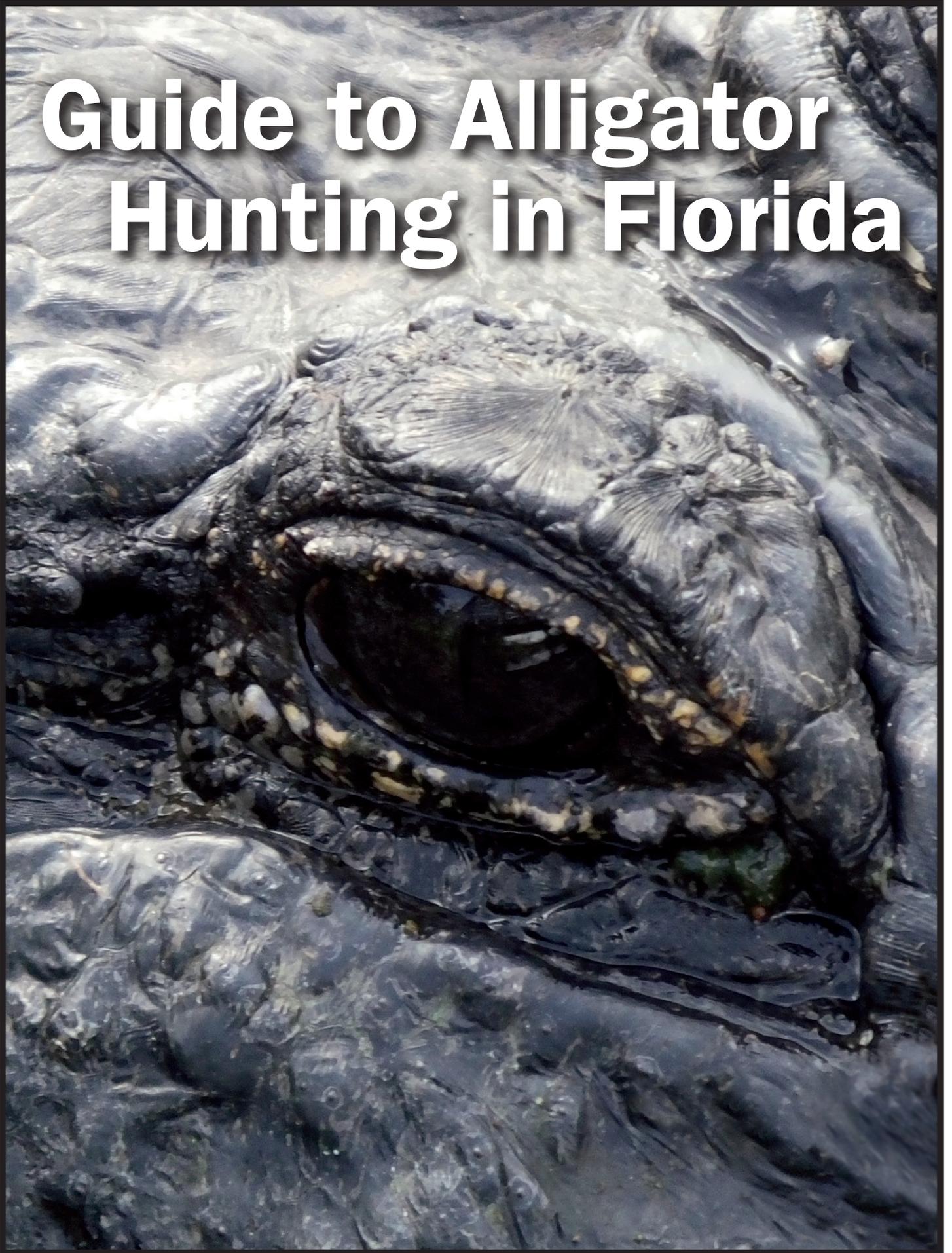


# Guide to Alligator Hunting in Florida





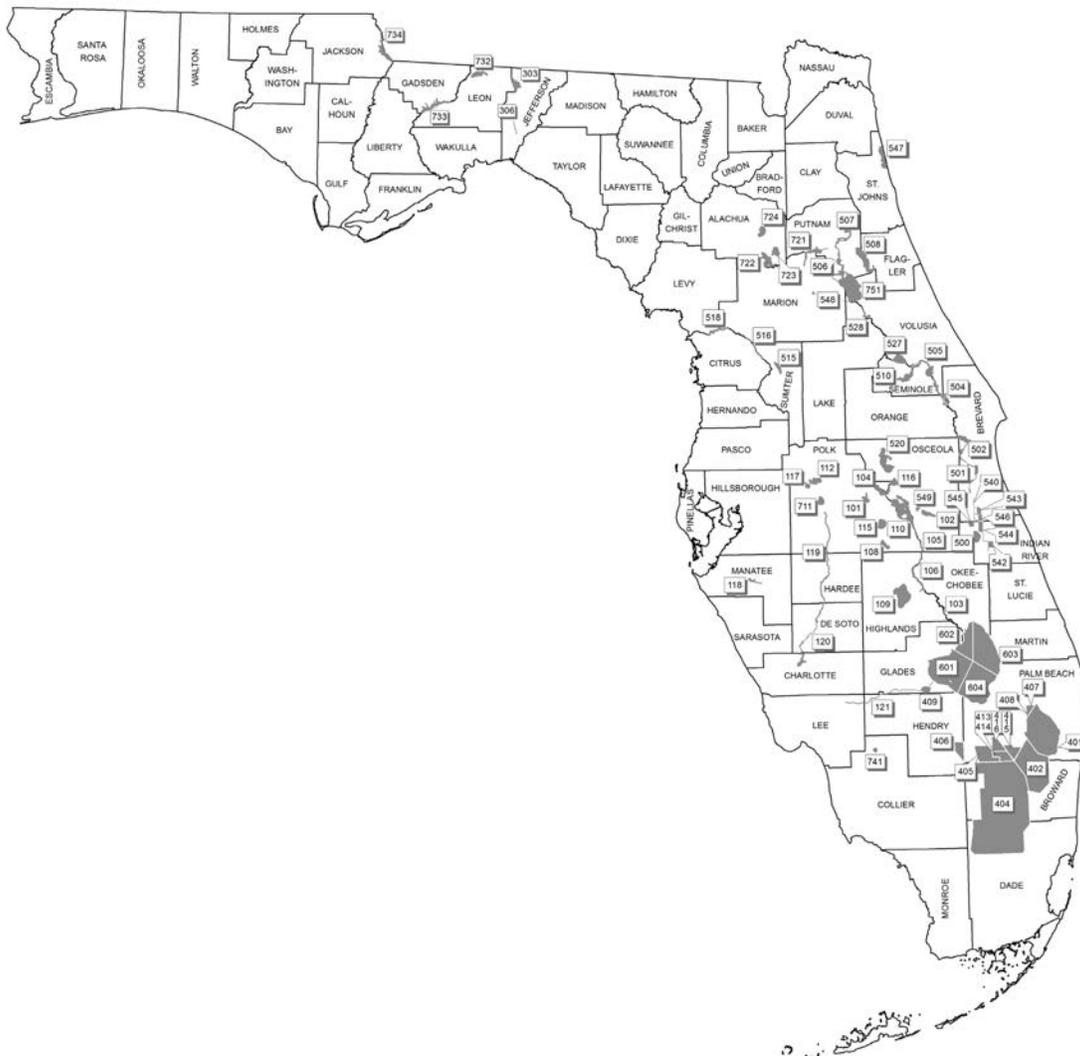
## When did FWC re-establish a recreational alligator hunting season in Florida? And why?

Since 1988, the FWC has offered hunters the opportunity to take part in its annual statewide recreational alligator harvest. These special night hunts provide a thrilling, hands-on hunting adventure. Also, alligator meat is a delicious and healthy choice, and the hide can be tanned and made into leather products. The purpose of reinstating alligator hunting was to provide the public with a much-desired opportunity to hunt alligators in Florida. Recreational alligator hunting is just one part of the FWC's overall approach to managing the population. Alligator conservation is a huge success story, and it's estimated there are approximately 1.3 million alligators living in Florida.

## Where can I hunt alligators?

You may apply for a county-wide alligator trapping license in 65 of Florida's 67 counties. **County-wide** licenses are not available for Miami-Dade and Monroe counties. If you are awarded this type of license, it will allow you to hunt alligators in most public bodies of water within that particular county. Public bodies of water can be accessed by **public boat landings/launches**. With this type license, you may also hunt any private ponds or lakes within that county, where you are given permission from the landowner. It's important to know where you're going to hunt before you apply and that **county-wide licenses do not allow you to hunt in any of the specific harvest units (listed on the left-hand side of pages 2-3)**.

There are also **69 harvest units** for which you may apply. If you obtain one of these licenses, you may only hunt within that particular lake, impoundment or section of river.



<b>Harvest Unit</b>	<b>Estimated Number of Permits</b>	<b>County Unit</b>	<b>Estimated Number of Permits</b>
101 Lake Pierce	0	Alachua	45
102 Lake Marian	20	Baker	11
103 Kissimmee River (Pool E)	22	Bay	48
104 Lake Hatchineha	76	Bradford	28
105 Kissimmee River (Pool A)	19	Brevard	11
106 Kissimmee River	68	Broward	1
108 Lake Arbuckle	5	Calhoun	34
109 <i>Lake Istokpoga</i>	51	Charlotte	31
110 <i>Lake Kissimmee</i>	222	Citrus	45
112 <i>Tenoroc FMA</i>	2	Clay	116
115 Lake Weohyakapka	2	Collier	4
116 Cypress Lake	17	Columbia	4
117 Lake Parker	2	DeSoto	4
118 Lake Manatee	3	Dixie	28
119 Peace River North	4	Duval	37
120 Peace River South	3	Escambia	21
121 Caloosahatchee River	2	Flagler	14
303 Lake Miccosukee	35	Franklin	99
306 Wacissa River	4	Gadsden	4
401 <i>A.R.M. Loxahatchee NWR</i>	9	Gilchrist	7
402 <i>Everglades WMA (WCA 2)</i>	11	Glades	11
404 <i>Everglades WMA (WCA 3)</i>	52	Gulf	106
405 <i>Holey Land WMA</i>	16	Hamilton	4
406 <i>STA-5/6</i>	60	Hardee	4
407 <i>STA-1W North</i>	100	Hendry	7
408 <i>STA-1W South</i>	50	Hernando	4
409 Lake Hicpochee	7	Highlands	79
413 <i>STA-3/4 East</i>	60	Hillsborough	10
414 <i>STA-3/4 West</i>	40	Holmes	11
415 <i>STA-2</i>	35	Indian River	4
416 <i>A-1 FEB</i>	20	Jackson	28
500 Blue Cypress Lake	38	Jefferson	24
501 St. Johns River (Lake Hell N' Blazes)	82	Lafayette	7
502 St. Johns River (Lake Poinsett)	138	Lake	272

<b>Harvest Unit</b>	<b>Estimated Number of Permits</b>	<b>County Unit</b>	<b>Estimated Number of Permits</b>
<b>504 St. Johns River (Puzzle Lake)</b>	133	<b>Lee</b>	45
<b>505 Lake Harney</b>	115	<b>Leon</b>	34
<b>506 St. Johns River (Welaka)</b>	51	<b>Levy</b>	34
<b>507 St. Johns River (Palatka South)</b>	21	<b>Liberty</b>	62
<b>508 Crescent Lake</b>	89	<b>Madison</b>	4
<b>510 Lake Jesup</b>	78	<b>Manatee</b>	62
<b>515 Lake Panasoffkee</b>	5	<b>Marion</b>	82
<b>516 Withlacoochee River North</b>	2	<b>Martin</b>	11
<b>518 Lake Rousseau</b>	30	<b>Nassau</b>	99
<b>520 Lake Tohopekaliga</b>	103	<b>Okaloosa</b>	14
<b>527 Lake Monroe</b>	52	<b>Okeechobee</b>	4
<b>528 Lake Dexter</b>	23	<b>Orange</b>	58
<b>540 St. Johns River Upper Basin Canals</b>	137	<b>Osceola</b>	133
<b>542 Blue Cypress Water Mgmt. Area</b>	22	<b>Palm Beach</b>	7
<b>543 Broadmoor Unit – T.M. Goodwin</b>	60	<b>Pasco</b>	4
<b>544 Stick Marsh</b>	43	<b>Pinellas</b>	4
<b>545 Kenansville Lake</b>	159	<b>Polk</b>	211
<b>546 Goodwin Unit</b>	22	<b>Putnam</b>	119
<b>547 Guana River WMA</b>	23	<b>Santa Rosa</b>	58
<b>548 Ocala WMA</b>	1	<b>Sarasota</b>	4
<b>549 Three Lakes WMA</b>	59	<b>Seminole</b>	4
<b>601 Lake Okeechobee (West)</b>	247	<b>St. Johns</b>	194
<b>602 Lake Okeechobee (North)</b>	87	<b>St. Lucie</b>	11
<b>603 Lake Okeechobee (East)</b>	7	<b>Sumter</b>	34
<b>604 Lake Okeechobee (South)</b>	152	<b>Suwannee</b>	7
<b>711 Lake Hancock</b>	32	<b>Taylor</b>	4
<b>721 Rodman Reservoir</b>	48	<b>Union</b>	14
<b>722 Orange Lake</b>	147	<b>Volusia</b>	34
<b>723 Lochloosa Lake</b>	57	<b>Wakulla</b>	28
<b>724 Newnans Lake</b>	93	<b>Walton</b>	62
<b>732 Lake Iamonia</b>	41	<b>Washington</b>	45
<b>733 Lake Talquin</b>	6		
<b>734 Lake Seminole</b>	20		
<b>741 Lake Trafford</b>	36		
<b>751 Lake George</b>	135		

## When is the alligator hunting season?

The statewide recreational alligator hunting season runs Aug. 15 – Nov. 1 each year. And depending on what harvest period you draw, you will be allowed to hunt one of the first 4 weeks and the remaining 7 weeks of the season:

Harvest Period	Hunt Dates	
Harvest period 1	Aug. 15 – 22	Sept. 12 – Nov. 1
Harvest period 2	Aug. 22 – 29	Sept. 12 – Nov. 1
Harvest period 3	Aug. 29 – Sept. 5	Sept. 12 – Nov. 1
Harvest period 4	Sept. 5 – Nov. 1	

Please note that all **STA harvest units**, **A-1 FEB** and **A.R.M. Loxahatchee NWR** are weekend-only hunts.

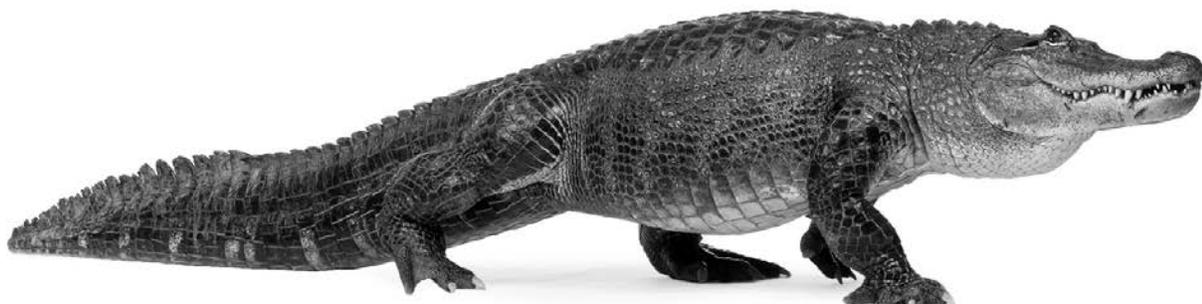
## What license do I need to be able to hunt alligators? And how do I obtain it?

Hunters need an alligator trapping license/harvest permit, which costs \$272 for residents, \$22 for those possessing a Florida Resident Persons with Disabilities Hunting and Fishing License, and \$1,022 for nonresidents. For those who already have an alligator trapping license, the harvest permit costs \$62.

This license comes with 2 hide validation (CITES) tags and allows for the take of 2 alligators. Applicants must be at least 18-years-old by Aug. 15, and have a valid credit or debit card to apply.

You may submit your application at [GoOutdoorsFlorida.com](http://GoOutdoorsFlorida.com), county tax collectors' offices and most retail outlets that sell hunting and fishing supplies during these application periods:

Phase	Application Dates
<b>Phase I</b>	Mid May
<i>Anyone may apply.</i>	
<b>Phase II</b>	Late May to early June
<i>If you were awarded a license in Phase I, you may not apply in Phase II.</i>	
<b>Phase III</b>	Mid June
<i>If you were awarded a license in Phase I or II, you may not apply in Phase III.</i>	
<b>Phase IV (leftovers)</b>	Late June until sold out
<i>Anyone may apply, and if you were awarded a license in any of the first three phases, any additional license drawn in Phase IV will cost \$62, regardless of residency.</i>	
<i>Note - There is a maximum of 10 permits allowed per person.</i>	



If you need or want to make changes to your application's hunt choices or credit card information, you may do so prior to the drawing while logged into your account at [GoOutdoorsFlorida.com](http://GoOutdoorsFlorida.com).

Drawings will be held within three days of each application period closing. Applicants can expect to see an authorization hold on their credit card verifying there is sufficient balance to cover the cost of the permit, but this does not mean they were awarded a permit. All successful applicants will be charged, while those who were unsuccessful will have the authorization holds lifted from their credit cards.

Alligator trapping "agent" licenses can also be purchased for \$52, regardless of residency. This license allows one to participate in the hunt, while assisting and being in the presence of someone who has an alligator trapping license/harvest permit (as described above). Anyone wishing to hunt alligators needs to have one of these two licenses. Youth (ages 15 and younger) are exempt from having to have an alligator trapping agent license. Those possessing a Florida Resident Persons with Disabilities Hunting and Fishing License are exempt from the cost of an agent license but must still have one to assist in hunting alligators.

Both types of alligator trapping licenses are nontransferable. All license sales are final, and no refunds will be made. No other license is required to hunt alligators.

You will receive your alligator trapping license and two CITES alligator tags in the mail within six weeks of payment. Check the license and make sure your name, harvest area and period are correct, and that the CITES tag numbers both match what is listed on the license. If you notice any discrepancies, please call 850-488-3641 as soon as possible.

### **Can my friend or spouse ride along in the boat with me just to watch me hunt alligators? Or do they also need some kind of license or permit?**

If they are not going to participate in the hunt, they do not need any license or permit. However, if they are 16 years old or older and would like to help you hunt alligators, they need to have a \$52 alligator trapping agent license (as described in the above question). Youth, ages 15 and younger, do not need an agent license to assist in alligator hunting.

### **If I have an alligator trapping license, may I assist another person on their hunt? Or am I required to buy a \$52 alligator trapping agent license to do this?**

You do not need to buy the agent license, because your alligator trapping license also covers you to assist other trappers on their hunts.

### **Do I need to have my hunter safety certification to participate in alligator hunting? And does the FWC offer any classes on how to hunt alligators?**

It's a good idea to have taken and completed a state certified hunter safety course, but it is not required by law when hunting alligators. Yes, the FWC does offer alligator hunt training classes from mid-July to early August. These free classes are not mandatory, but beginning hunters are strongly encouraged to attend. See [MyFWC.com/Alligator](http://MyFWC.com/Alligator) under "[Statewide Alligator Harvest Program](#)" for locations and dates of these training classes.

### **What are the hunting hours?**

The hunting hours for alligators are between 5 p.m. and 10 a.m., although you may scout for alligators at any time. But if you are scouting during nonhunting hours or during a day that you are not licensed to hunt, you must keep any and all alligator hunting equipment disassembled and stowed away, or leave it at home.



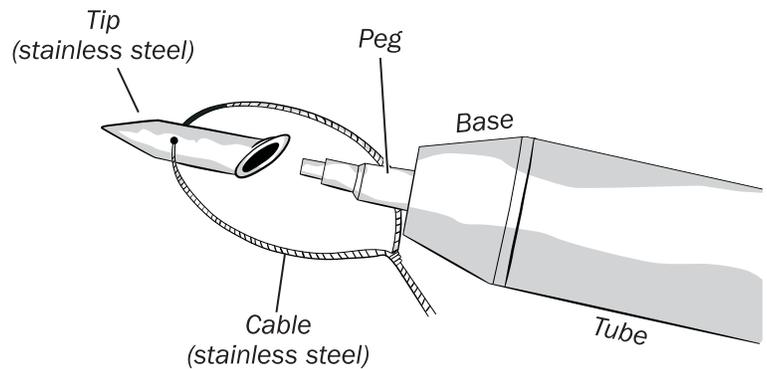
## What are the legal methods of take for alligators?

- Bows and crossbows
- Gigs
- Harpoons
- Spears
- Spearguns

All points used in any of the above methods of take must be attached to a restraining line and should be capable of fully penetrating an alligator's thick hide and won't come out when you pull back against the alligator. Explosive or drug-injecting tips are not allowed.

- Fishing poles using a weighted treble hook
- Fishing poles using artificial lures
- Baited wooded pegs (must be less than 2 inches long) using a fishing pole or hand-held line
- Hand-line snatch hooks
- Hand-held catch poles
- Hand-held snares
- Bang sticks (the only firearm you're allowed to use for alligator hunting)

A video explaining in detail all of the "Legal methods of take for alligator hunting in Florida" can be seen at [YouTube.com/HuntFloridaTV](https://www.youtube.com/HuntFloridaTV).



Detachable-head harpoon

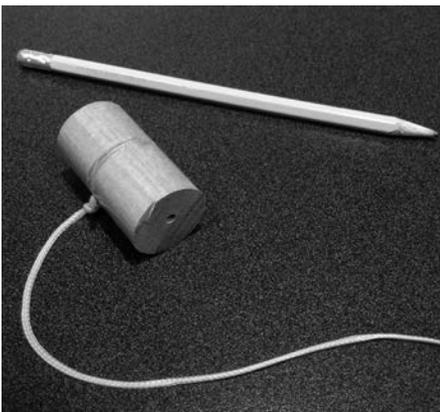
## In Florida, can we use a rifle or pistol to take alligators or use huge baited hooks tied to trees like they do on some of those TV shows?

Those are commercial alligator trapping methods, and you may not use these methods during Florida's recreational alligator hunt. The only firearm you are allowed to use in Florida to take an alligator is a bang stick, and it can only be used when an alligator is attached to a restraining line.

And if you want to use raw meat as bait, you must wrap it around a wooden peg that is less than 2 inches long. You cannot use a hook when you are using such bait. And you must remain in contact with the bait by holding onto the other end of the line at all times when you have the bait out in the water.

## I don't understand how a wooden peg is going to catch an alligator. Exactly how does that method of take work?

Many hunters have success catching alligators using wooden pegs wrapped with stinky baits that float. Beef lung is a preferred bait used with the wooden peg method of take. Such bait is attached using a rubber band or string to a wooden peg (less than 2-inch-long section of a broomstick handle) with a hole drilled through it and tied to a heavy-duty braided or monofilament line. A fishing pole can be used or the line can be hand-held or tied to your boat.



Alligators have a **palatal valve** at the back of their mouth that closes when they go underwater, preventing water from getting into their stomach and lungs. When an alligator swallows the bait and wooden peg, the wooden peg gets trapped behind this valve, allowing you to maintain contact with the alligator and pull it closer to your boat. But pulling back too hard on the line can pull the peg through the alligator's valve, so you should always try to get a more secure method of take on the alligator to help tire it out and get it alongside your boat to catch with a snare and/or hit with a bang stick.

## Can I use recorded or electronic game calls to hunt alligators?

Yes. Because alligators are not classified as “game animals,” recorded game calls and sounds may be used when hunting alligators, and they actually work at drawing alligators to you.

## Are there any tips on how to locate and find a good-sized alligator?

Large adult alligators are territorial and tend to stay within a relatively confined home range if their habitat and food needs are met, and they are not harassed. Therefore, if you happen to see a good-sized alligator while you are scouting in the pre-season, there is a good chance that same alligator can be found later in the same vicinity. If you see an alligator in the deeper open water, often times it is a larger one. And if you shine your light on an alligator as you are approaching, if it submerges or starts to quickly swim away, those are other signs it might be a large alligator.



## Are there any tips on how best to sneak up and get close to an alligator? Does the color clothes you have on make any difference?

Try to approach an alligator as quietly as you can, using either an electric trolling motor or paddles. Alligators also are wary of bright spotlights and will quickly submerge to avoid the light. So after you have located one, try using a dimmed or filtered light as you approach it. It's best not to shine the light in its eyes the entire time, but rather wave your light on and off its eyes. Yes, the color clothes you have on can make a difference, and it is recommended to wear darker-colored clothes, so you can blend in better with the night sky.

## Is there a minimum size an alligator must be for it to be legal to take?

Most alligator hunters try to take as big of an alligator as possible. But as long as the alligator measures at least 18 inches long (from tip-of-snout to tip-of-tail), it is legal to harvest.

## Can you judge about how long or how big an alligator is by looking at its head?

When an alligator is in the water, often all that is visible is its head. But you can gauge about how long an alligator is by estimating how many inches are between the bump of its snout and its eye. That number of inches is about how many feet long the alligator is from nose to tip of tail. Also, if you shine a light on an alligator that is facing you, and you see a large gap (4 inches or more) between its two glowing red eyes, then that is likely an adult alligator that you may want to take.

*You can gauge about how long an alligator is by estimating how many inches are between the bump of its snout and its eye.*



## **Where should I concentrate my shot placement on an alligator if I am using a method of take that uses a harpoon dart, bowfishing/speargun/gig point or a hook?**

An alligator's head is mostly made up of hard bone, and its entire back is protected with bony scutes, so any shots taken on those areas will likely deflect and bounce off. Instead, aim for the side of its body, its legs or jowls. These areas are softer, and the hide there can be penetrated by various darts, points and hooks. However, if your method of take uses a hook, know that the point of your hook might easily stick into an alligator, but it's unlikely that the hook's barb will penetrate its thick hide. So it's important to maintain pressure by pulling back against the alligator at all times and not allow any slack in the line, or your hook could come out and you'll lose the alligator.

## **If I don't own enough alligator hunting equipment or am uncomfortable trying this myself, are there any alligator hunting guides that I can contact about hiring to take me on a hunt?**

You can find alligator hunting guides at [MyFWC.com/Outfitters](http://MyFWC.com/Outfitters).

## **Are there certain precautions I should take when hunting and handling an alligator?**

Alligators can be dangerous when approached, so use extreme caution. After harvesting an alligator, you should wash your hands thoroughly with soap or an anti-bacterial solution. In the unfortunate event that you are bitten by an alligator, seek medical attention right away because bites can result in serious infection.

## **Am I allowed to release an alligator that I catch back into the water?**

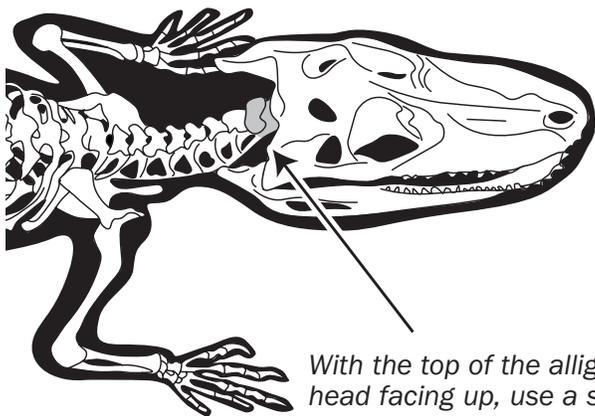
Catch-and-release is only allowed when using snatch hooks, hand-held snares and catch poles. Therefore, if you are using any other method of take, make sure to only attempt to capture an alligator that you want to keep.

## **How do I humanely kill an alligator?**

Delivering a quick, humane kill that results in immediate loss of consciousness and destruction of the brain is part of an alligator hunter's ethical obligation. This is accomplished by using a bang stick, once the alligator is restrained alongside your boat. To safely and humanely dispatch the alligator, aim for the center of the spine directly behind the skull plate, where the back of the alligator's head almost meets its neck. After doing this, or if you do not have a bang stick, slip a hand-held snare over the snout and pull it tight so the alligator cannot open

its mouth. Use another snare and/or a catch pole to pull the alligator's head over the side of the boat. Then take a stick-like object and push down on the alligator's snout to further prevent its mouth from being able to open. Carefully and quickly grab the side of the jaw and apply enough pressure to keep its mouth completely shut. Then wrap the snout tightly and securely with electrical or duct tape. With the top of the alligator's head facing up, use a sharp knife to sever the spinal cord by cutting across the body between the back of the head and first vertebra.

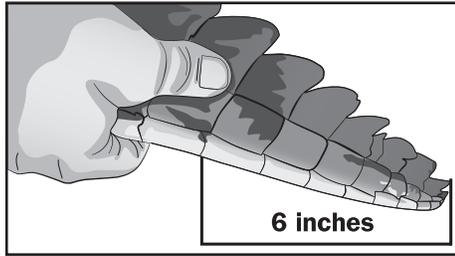
To ensure the alligator is dead, insert a metal shaft such as a flathead screwdriver into the brain cavity to pith and destroy the brain. When you see the alligator's eyes close tight and retract, it is dead. Now it is safe to pull the alligator's body into your boat and allow it to bleed out by hanging its head over the side of the boat.



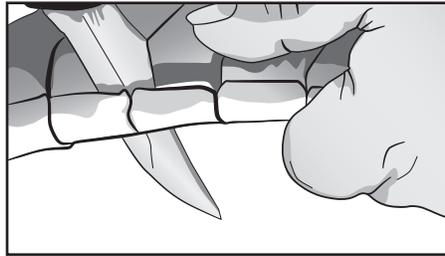
*With the top of the alligator's head facing up, use a sharp knife to sever the spinal cord by cutting across the body between the back of the head and first vertebra.*

## After I have harvested an alligator, what then do I legally have to do?

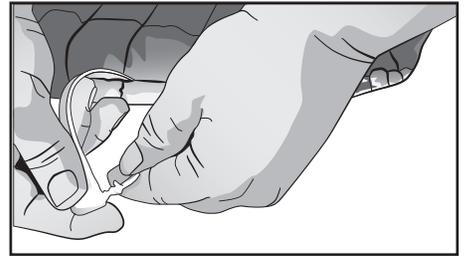
Immediately after the alligator is dead, you must attach, using a knife, your CITES alligator tag within 6 inches from the tip of its tail. Until that alligator's hide is tanned, taxidermied or made into alligator products, the CITES tag must remain in place on the tail.



*Immediately after the alligator is dead, attach your CITES alligator tag within 6 inches from the tip of the tail.*



*Insert knife at base of tail within 6 inches of the tip of the tail.*



*Insert CITES tag into knife hole and lock. Pull on tag to confirm it is locked securely. Tag must remain with the hide.*

Within 24 hours of harvesting an alligator and prior to taking it to an alligator processing facility, you must complete an alligator harvest report form either **online** or a **printed hardcopy** that can be obtained at [MyFWC.com/Alligator](http://MyFWC.com/Alligator).

Information that you will be asked includes:

- Date harvested
- County and location
- Total length (*If you happen to take an alligator that measures 14 feet or greater, please call 352-357-0190, so the FWC can take an official measurement.*)
- Tail girth
- Sex
- Pounds of meat yielded

*Take tail girth measurement at the third scute row behind its back legs.*



Completed hardcopies can be mailed to: FWC Alligator Management Program, 1239 SW 10th Street, Ocala, FL 34471. *Please note: a copy of your completed form must accompany your alligator hide at all times.*

## What if I harvest an alligator that has a tag on it?

Many alligators the FWC captures for research purposes are tagged, and if you happen to harvest one of these tagged alligators, please call 352-357-0190. Data such as body measurements and harvest location provides FWC biologists with valuable information.

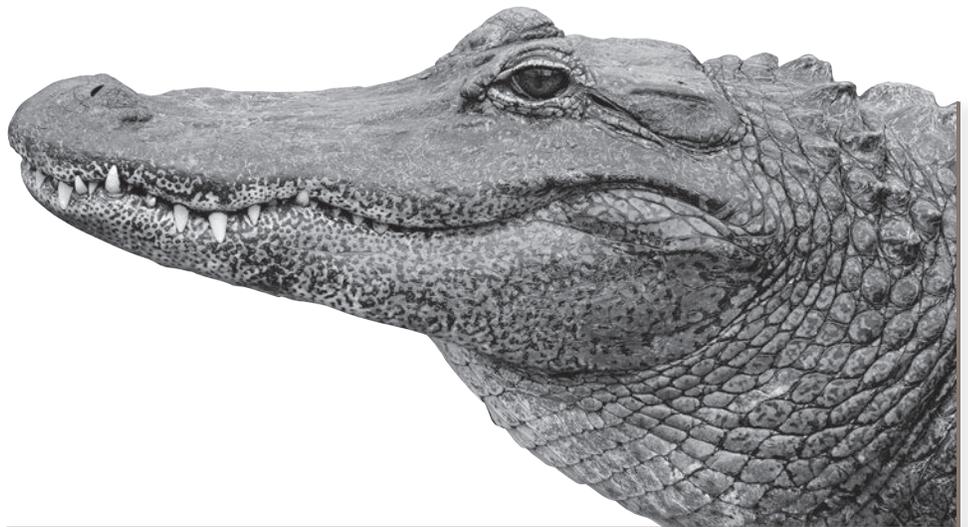


## What is the best way to preserve my alligator until I can process it or get it into a walk-in cooler?

Alligator meat can spoil quickly under warm conditions, so until you can get your alligator refrigerated or butchered, try to keep it out of direct sunlight and as cool as possible by putting a sufficient amount of bags of ice over top of it and cover with a blanket or tarp. When possible, try to get your alligator under 45 degrees F within four hours of harvesting it.

## Can I butcher my own alligator, or am I required to bring it to a certified wild game processor?

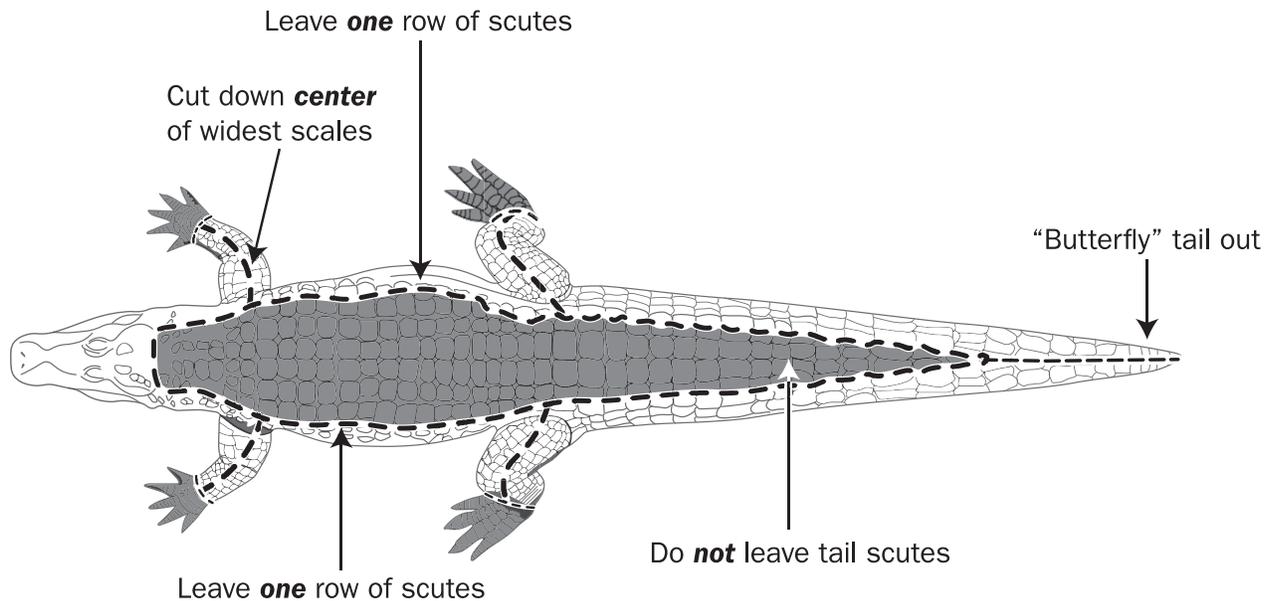
You may do it yourself or you can take it to a processor to have it butchered. However, if you plan to sell any of the meat, you can only legally do so if it was processed by a licensed alligator processing facility. A listing of alligator meat processors can be found at [MyFWC.com/Alligator](http://MyFWC.com/Alligator).



## How do you properly skin and butcher an alligator?

You will need a steady table at a comfortable height, good lighting, a sharp knife and sharpener, a scraper and salt to get started. You can learn “How to clean, fillet, debone and skin an alligator” by watching the Florida Sportsman – Seminar Series video at [YouTube.com/FLSportsman](https://www.youtube.com/FLSportsman).

*Cut lines for skinning an alligator for commercial sale or use in the making of alligator leather products*



*If you would like your alligator hide made into a “taxidermy mount,” consult with your taxidermist prior to skinning the alligator.*

## How do I properly store my alligator meat until I am ready to cook it?

Store fresh alligator meat in the coldest part of your refrigerator at 32 degrees F for up to two days. If you want to marinate it, only do so with the meat in the refrigerator.

To freeze it, wrap the meat tightly to prevent freezer burn and store at 0 degrees F for up to six months. It's recommended that you date the package and mandatory to label each package with the CITES tag number and license holder's name using permanent ink.

After handling raw alligator meat, thoroughly wash knives, cutting surfaces, sponges and hands with hot, soapy water.

## What's the best way to preserve my alligator hide for future use?

If done correctly, a brine solution for both curing and storing alligator hides is one of the best ways. But close attention must be paid to keep the brine saturated with salt, and hides should be checked frequently to assure proper curing. Information on this can be found on the Louisiana Alligator Advisory Council's website – [LouisianaAlligators.com/hide-care.html](https://LouisianaAlligators.com/hide-care.html).

A listing of Florida alligator hide dealers can be found at [MyFWC.com/Alligator](https://MyFWC.com/Alligator).

## Am I allowed to sell any of the meat, hide or parts of my harvested alligator?

You are allowed to sell the meat only if it was processed by a licensed alligator processing facility. Hides may only be sold to licensed fur and hide dealers, which can be found at [MyFWC.com/Alligator](https://MyFWC.com/Alligator). You are, however, allowed to give or sell skeletal parts (including the skull) to anyone. But records must be kept showing who the parts were transferred to.

## **I'm ready to try some alligator meat. Where can I find some recipes for cooking it?**

Alligator is a lean meat that is low in fat and cholesterol and high in protein. It's mild in flavor and can easily be substituted in most recipes for chicken, pork, veal or fish.

Always thaw alligator meat in the refrigerator. Discard any used marinade to avoid bacteria from raw juices. After handling raw meat, thoroughly wash knives, cutting surfaces, sponges and hands with hot, soapy water.

Alligator tail and jowls, the choicest cuts, are a mild-flavored white meat with a texture similar to veal. The legs and ribs are darker meat with a stronger taste and texture similar to pork shoulder. For extra tenderness, use a meat mallet to tenderize fillets and flatten meat to desired thickness. The leg meat is best when it's chopped fine or ground to make patties, sausage or used in tacos or spaghetti.

Cook alligator meat using either a short cooking time with high heat (as in searing, pan frying or deep frying) or a long, slow-cook method such as simmering in a sauce, stewing or braising. Alligator meat can be used in jambalayas, soups and stews, and is easily enhanced with seasonings, sauces and marinades.

Always remember to keep raw and cooked alligator meat separate to prevent bacterial cross-contamination.

Several delicious and nutritious alligator recipes can be found on the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' website – [FreshFromFlorida.com/Recipes/Seafood/Alligator](http://FreshFromFlorida.com/Recipes/Seafood/Alligator).

## **Do I need to provide the FWC with anything else after the hunt?**

You will need to mail back any unused CITES alligator tags by Nov. 15 to:

FWC Alligator Management Program  
1239 SW 10th Street  
Ocala, FL 34471

## **Some parting words**

The recovery of the alligator in Florida is a conservation success story. Florida is fortunate to have abundant alligator populations throughout the state, which are capable of supporting hunting, and it is important that hunting remain a viable tool used to manage this great resource and species. However, how hunters behave and how their conduct is perceived by others can possibly impact the future of alligator hunting in Florida. Here are some suggestions for good hunter conduct that can help keep hunting viewed in a positive light:

- When alligator hunting late at night, keep the volume of your voice to a minimum so as not to disturb those residents living along the water's edge who may be sleeping. Also, avoid shining lights on those residences.
- Transport harvested animals discreetly
- Be a credit to, and good representative of, the sporting community
- Be respectful to others who may not share your views on hunting
- As a hunter, please continue to do your part in helping build upon the overall support for hunting in Florida.

**Be safe, good luck and have fun!**

## **68A-25.042 Regulations Governing Statewide Alligator Trapping, Permitting, Taking and Sale.**

No person shall take non-hatchling alligators from the wild except as provided herein and under other applicable rules of the Commission.

(1) Establishment of alligator management units and harvest quotas:

(a) Management units comprised of specified wetlands, lakes, rivers or other water bodies that may be reasonably grouped for the purposes of study, analysis or management and that are suitable for harvest based on habitat characteristics, accessibility, and estimated alligator densities shall be established by the executive director or his designee.

(b) Annual harvest quotas for each management unit shall be established by the executive director, or his designee, and shall be based upon an evaluation of on-site habitat or population inventories for each management unit. The harvest quota for a management unit shall be based on the best estimate of the number of alligators that can be removed from the unit without long-term adverse impacts on population levels.

(2) Harvest permit issuance:

(a) Harvest permits may be applied for through the Commission's online licensing system at designated times and dates each year by:

1. Paying for an alligator trapping license, unless exempt, as specified by Section 379.3751, F.S., and \$10 for each CITES tag, pursuant to Section 379.3752, F.S., issued with harvest permits; or

2. Providing evidence of possession of an alligator trapping license valid through the last day of the designated harvest season, or a current-year Statewide Alligator Harvest Permit, and paying \$30 for each CITES tag, pursuant to Section 379.3752, F.S., issued with harvest permits.

(b) Applicants for a harvest permit shall:

1. Be 18 years of age or older by August 15 in the current application year.

2. Not have been convicted of any violation of Section 379.409 or 379.3015, F.S., or rules of the Commission relating to the illegal taking of any crocodylian species:

a. For a period of five (5) years preceding the date of application; or

b. For a period of ten (10) years preceding the date of application if such conviction involved the taking of an endangered crocodylian species.

(c) Permits shall be issued upon determination that the applicant meets the requirements of this subsection.

(d) CITES tags shall be issued with each harvest permit, except that harvest tags bearing the letters "MER" shall also be issued with harvest permits for management units for which the best available scientific data indicates the average mercury concentrations in alligators therein exceeds the Federal limit for legal sale of the meat.

(e) Harvest permits shall be valid only for the management unit and harvest period indicated thereon, and harvest permits and their associated harvest tags, if issued, and CITES tags are not transferable.

(f) The number of harvest permits issued per person shall be determined by the executive director or his designee.

(3) Alligator trapping requirements:

(a) Alligators may only be taken in accordance with the provisions of the alligator harvest permit.

(b) Alligators may be taken from 5 p.m. until 10 a.m. each day during the harvest period specified in the harvest permit. Harvest periods shall be from 5 p.m. on September 12 until 10 a.m. on November 1, and from either 5 p.m. on August 15 until 10 a.m. on August 22, or 5 p.m. on August 22 until 10 a.m. on August 29, or 5 p.m. on August 29 until 10 a.m. on September 5, or 5 p.m. on September 5 until 10 a.m. on September 12, except as otherwise provided in the harvest permit.

(c) Only non-hatchling alligators may be taken.

(d) Legal methods to take:

1. Alligators captured using hand-held snares and snatch hooks must be released or killed immediately.
2. Alligators taken by the use of artificial lures or baited, wooden pegs less than two (2) inches in length attached to hand-held restraining lines or restraining lines attached to a vessel occupied by the permittee and harpoons, gigs, and manually operated spears, spearguns, crossbows and bows with projectiles attached to restraining lines must be killed immediately.
3. The use of baited hooks, gig-equipped bang sticks, or firearms for taking alligators is prohibited except that bang sticks are permitted for taking alligators attached to a restraining line.
4. Notwithstanding Rule 68A-4.002, F.A.C., a light may be used in conjunction with these methods of take.

(e) Any persons actively participating in the taking of alligators as provided herein shall possess an alligator trapping license or alligator trapping agent's license, if necessary, in accordance with the provisions of Section 379.3751, F.S. However, for the purposes of this provision, the taking of alligators does not include the activities of driving the vessel or the use of a light.

(f) Alligators may only be taken in the area specified in the alligator harvest permit.

(g) Any person possessing a valid alligator trapping or trapping agent's license, or who is exempt from such licenses, pursuant to Section 379.3751, F.S., may take alligators as provided in the harvest permit but only in the presence of the permittee.

(h) Immediately upon killing, a CITES tag issued by the Commission and a harvest tag, if issued, shall be locked through the skin of the carcass within six (6) inches of the tip of the tail. The CITES tag shall remain attached to the alligator hide until the hide is tanned, taxidermy mounted, or exported from the state. The harvest tag, if issued, shall remain attached to the alligator until processing. CITES tags may not be altered to compromise the locking mechanism in any way and shall be used only one time. The possession of any alligator hide not tagged as prescribed herein is prohibited, and such hide shall be subject to seizure and forfeiture to the Commission under the provisions of Section 379.338, F.S.

(i) An alligator harvest report form (FWC form 1001AT, effective April 30, 2000) provided by the Commission shall be completed by the permittee within 24 hours of taking each alligator and prior to the transfer of the carcass to another person. The permittee shall submit a legible copy of the alligator harvest report form to the Commission for receipt no later than 14 days after the expiration date of the harvest permit.

(j) Tags issued under this section shall remain the property of the Commission until affixed as provided herein. Tags issued pursuant to this section may be possessed only by the permittee or persons provided for in paragraph (3)(g) above prior to use. The permittee shall be strictly liable in ensuring that possession of unused tags is limited to persons authorized under this rule.

(k) All unused CITES tags shall be returned by the permittee to the Commission no later than 14 days after the expiration date of the harvest permit. It shall be a violation of this section for any person to possess any unused CITES tag(s) issued pursuant to this section 14 days after the expiration date of the harvest permit. Permits may be denied, pursuant to Rule 68-1.010, F.A.C., to applicants who have previously failed to return unused tags and complete forms as specified herein.

(4) Alligator processing and sale of parts.

(a) Alligator meat not discarded shall be processed or sold in accordance with Rule 68A-25.052, F.A.C.

(b) Commission personnel shall be granted access to collect biological data on and specimens from any alligators taken under the provisions of this rule, provided that specimens shall only be taken when necessary for the management of the species.

(5) Nothing herein shall prohibit the executive director from establishing special restrictions or exemptions from this rule for the purpose of conducting experimental alligator harvests on designated areas pursuant to Rule 68A-9.002, F.A.C.

*Rulemaking Authority Art. IV, Sec. 9, Fla. Const. Law Implemented Art. IV, Sec. 9, Fla. Const., 379.3751, 379.3752 FS. History—New 5-5-88, Amended 2-14-89, 4-11-90, 4-14-92, 4-29-93, 7-1-94, 3-30-95, 4-1-96, 9-15-96, 4-12-98, Formerly 39-25.042, Amended 4-30-00, 5-13-02, 4-11-04, 3-30-06, 3-19-08, 3-12-09, 7-20-09, 7-20-11, 3-24-13, 8-19-14, 2-1-16.*

## **68A-25.052 Regulations Governing the Processing of Alligators and the Sale of Alligator Meat and Parts.**

(1) Meat from legally acquired alligators that is not discarded and not processed for sale shall be packaged and labeled to indicate the CITES tag number and license holder's name in indelible ink on each package.

(2) Meat from alligators taken pursuant to Rule 68A-25.042, F.A.C., to which harvest tags have been affixed bearing the letters "MER" as part of the tag numbers may not be sold for human consumption and if not discarded must be permanently and visibly labeled "NOT FOR SALE, Recommend: NOT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION."

(3) Alligator meat may only be sold if imported or if processed from carcasses skinned in a permitted alligator processing facility and processed and packaged in such a facility as provided in this section.

(4) Alligator processing facilities may be established and operated only under permit from the executive director and shall be licensed as required by Section 379.3751, F.S. The criteria for issuance of an alligator processing facility permit are as follows:

(a) Persons may indicate their intent to establish an alligator processing facility when submitting their alligator trapping, alligator farming, or alligator processing license application, or if already licensed under Section 379.3751, F.S., they may submit a written request for an alligator processing facility permit to the Commission at least 30 days prior to the proposed date of operation. Such application or written request shall include a copy of the current food permit from the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for the proposed facility.

(b) The executive director shall not issue an alligator processing facility permit or shall revoke said permit for any person who has been convicted of any violation of Section 379.409 or 379.3015, F.S., or the rules of the Commission relating to the illegal taking of any crocodylian species:

1. For five (5) years following such conviction; or
2. For ten (10) years following, if such conviction involves the taking of an endangered crocodylian species.

(5) Provisions for the operation of alligator processing facilities:

(a) Alligator processors and their designated employees as provided by permit may receive and possess legally acquired, tagged, unskinned alligator carcasses and skinned alligator carcasses with the CITES tag number and, if applicable, the harvest tag number recorded on an attached tag for processing of meat and hides provided:

1. For alligators taken pursuant to Rules 68A-25.003, 68A-25.032, and 68A-25.042, F.A.C., the alligator harvest report form (FWC form 1001AT, effective April 30, 2000) shall be completed and signed immediately upon receipt, and shall be further completed upon processing to indicate the amount of meat packaged. A copy of the harvest report form shall accompany the carcass until processing.

2. Written records of the number, source, and disposition of all alligator carcasses received, bought, sold, or transferred, including copies of Alligator Harvest Report Forms (FWC form 1001AT), shall be maintained for a period of one year following sale, transfer, or disposal of the carcass, meat, hides, or parts thereof.

(b) Commission personnel shall be granted access to any permitted facility to collect biological specimens from and data on any alligators possessed under this subsection, provided that specimens shall only be collected when necessary for the management of the species.

(c) Processing and storage facilities and all Commission required records shall be subject to inspection by Commission personnel during reasonable hours.

(d) Meat processed or re-processed for sale must be packaged in a sealed, tamper-proof package (a package that must be permanently and noticeably altered if opened to remove or add meat). Each package must be permanently labeled to indicate the name of the processor processing the alligator(s), the CITES tag number(s) from the alligator(s) from which the meat was taken, the date packaged, and the number of pounds of meat enclosed. Each package and label shall be used to package meat only one time.

(6) Provisions for the sale of alligator meat:

(a) Written records of all alligator meat sales, with the exception of retail sales to the customer, shall be maintained for a period of one year following sale, and shall include the name of the seller and buyer, date of sale, and amount sold. Such records shall be open to inspection by Commission personnel during reasonable hours.

(b) All alligator meat purchased shall remain in the original package until the meat is re-processed or prepared for consumption, and packages shall be used to package meat only one time.

(c) Packages containing lawfully acquired alligator meat packaged and labeled in accordance with this rule may be shipped in intrastate or interstate commerce.

(7) Provisions for the importation of alligator meat to Florida:

(a) Meat must be acquired and processed in accordance with the applicable health and sanitation requirements and laws of the state of origin.

(b) All imported alligator meat shall be shipped in a tamper-proof package.

(c) Each package of imported alligator meat shall be labeled with a seal to identify the state of origin, the processor, the number of pounds of meat enclosed, and the date packaged.

(8) The feet, viscera or skeletal parts of lawfully acquired alligators may be retained or transferred provided that all transfers, with the exception of retail sales to the consumer, shall be documented in writing to indicate the kind and quantity of items and date transferred and the name and address of each recipient, and such records shall be maintained for a period of one year.

(9) Manufactured goods wholly or partly composed of alligator hide, organs, teeth, or skull, or other skeletal material may only be sold in accordance with provisions of Rule 68A-25.002, F.A.C.

(10) These requirements shall not be construed to supersede the regulatory authority of any federal, state or local entity regarding the processing or handling of food products, but shall be deemed supplemental thereto. Alligators processed hereunder shall be handled and processed in compliance with all applicable sanitation and permit requirements of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the county health department of the county in which the facility is located, and any other federal, state, or local authorities.

*Specific Authority Art. IV, Sec. 9, Fla. Const. Law Implemented Art. IV, Sec. 9, Fla. Const., 379.3012, 379.3751 FS. History—New 5-5-88, Amended 2-14-89, 4-11-90, 4-1-96, 9-15-96, 6-1-97, 4-12-98, 4-15-99, Formerly 39-25.052, Amended 4-30-00, 3-30-06.*





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