

WALTER RABON
COMMISSIONER

TED WILL
DIRECTOR

February 29, 2024

MEMORANDUM

TO: INTERESTED PERSONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

FROM: TED WILL

SUBJECT: **NOTICE AND SYNOPSIS OF PROPOSED RULE MAKING**

Notice is hereby given that, pursuant to authority contained in the Game and Fish Code (Official Code of Georgia Annotated, Secs. 27-1-4 and 27-3-15), the Board of Natural Resources proposes to amend Department of Natural Resources rules governing the hunting of game animals and game birds. The proposed rule (copy attached hereto), when adopted, will amend Subject 391-4-2, Hunting Regulations.

SYNOPSIS AND MAIN FEATURES

The purpose of hunting regulations is to manage Georgia's game birds and game animals according to sound principles of wildlife management and to meet public objectives for use of these renewable natural resources. Changes to the existing rules are responsive to public desires for opening quail season earlier, reflect the need to adopt hunting regulations for two new wildlife management areas (WMA) known as Cochran's Creek (Dawson County) and Featherfield WMA (Seminole County), and provides for department-sponsored specialty hunts, mobility-impaired hunts, and hunt-and-learn events on department-managed lands.

This notice and synopsis of the proposed rule, together with an exact copy of proposed rule, is being mailed to all persons who have requested in writing that they be placed on the mailing list and have tendered the actual cost of such mailing. Copies of all these documents are also available by electronic mail and are available for review on the Division web page (www.gohuntgeorgia.com). Please call Paige Gurley at (706) 557-3350 to request a copy.

The public may submit comments on this proposed rule electronically by email through the Division website, by telephone (706-557-3350) or by submitting written statements, before close of business on March 31, 2024. Written statements should be mailed to the attention of Dr. Tina Johannsen at:

Department of Natural Resources
Wildlife Resources Division
Game Management Section
2067 U.S. Highway 278, S.E.
Social Circle, Georgia 30025

The Board of Natural Resources will consider the proposed rules and related comments received on April 24, 2024 at 9:00 A.M. at the Jekyll Island Convention Center, Meeting Rooms 7/8/9, 75 Beachview Drive North, Jekyll Island, GA 31527. Please bring this notice to the attention of interested acquaintances.

TW/jwb

Attachment: Proposed Regulations

**Public Participation Plan for
Proposed Hunting Regulations Changes to Subject 391-4-2
(Quail Season Opening Date, Cochrans Creek & Featherfield WMAs, &
Specialty Hunts on Department-managed Lands)**

Amendments to Subject 391-4-2, Hunting Regulations, are being considered. These amendments include changes responsive to public desires for opening quail season earlier, reflect the need to adopt hunting regulations for two new wildlife management areas (WMA) known as Cochrans Creek (Dawson County) and Featherfield WMA (Seminole County), and provides for department-sponsored specialty hunts, mobility-impaired hunts, and hunt-and-learn events on department-managed lands. Public input is an important component of the decision-making process. The plan for receiving and considering public input includes publicly noticing the proposed regulations and the submission of written, verbal, and electronic comments.

WRD staff will brief the Board of Natural Resources on the proposed amendment in draft form. The proposed amendment will be publicly noticed as required under the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), O.C.G.A. §50-3-4, will be forwarded to legislative counsel and mailed to all persons who have requested in writing that they be placed on the mailing list and have tendered the actual cost of such mailing. All interested persons will be given an opportunity to submit written comments to WRD by mail or electronically. Following the public notice, the Board of Natural Resources will consider the proposed rule and related comments received at its April 24, 2024, meeting, 9:00 A.M. at the Jekyll Island Convention Center, Meeting Rooms 7/8/9, 75 Beachview Drive North, Jekyll Island, GA 31527.

**Schedule for Public Participation for
Proposed Hunting Regulations Changes to Subject 391-4-2**

Description of Action	Action Date
Present proposed amendments to Board’s Wildlife Resources’ Committee	02/27/2024
APA notice distributed, posted on website and provided to legislative counsel	02/29/2024
Deadline for submitting comments on proposed regulations	03/31/2024
Final approval of regulations by Board of Natural Resources	04/24/2024

SUBJECT	PROPOSED CHANGE	CURRENT REGULATION	CHANGE	JUSTIFICATION
391-4-2-.31 Fox, Grouse, Opossum, Quail, Rabbit, Raccoon, Squirrel, Bobcat.				
Opening day of quail season	Opens statewide quail season on the 2 nd Saturday in November	Statewide season opens on the Saturday after November 11	Opens the season 7 days earlier in most years	This change is responsive to public desires for more opportunity and more consistent opening date.
391-4-2-.72 Provisional Regulations for Newly Added Wildlife Management Areas.				
Cochrans Creek WMA	Provide deer hunting opportunity with 2 segments of archery deer hunting and 4 segments of firearms deer hunting. Maximize small game and turkey hunting opportunity.	No Seasons	Proposed regulations provide deer hunting opportunity with 60 days of archery hunting and 16 days of firearms deer hunting. Proposed regulations provide full season (39 days) turkey hunting opportunity. Proposed regulations maximize small game hunting opportunity at 181 days outside of deer hunts.	The acquisition of this 2,057-acre tract in Dawson County enhances access to state-owned public lands. Proposals establish regulated hunting opportunities on this new area.
Featherfield WMA	Provides archery only deer hunting across the state deer seasons. Provides 4 days over two weekends of turkey hunting. Provides dove hunting for the first 3 Saturdays of the dove season then	No seasons	Proposed regulations provide deer hunting opportunity with 121 days of archery hunting. Proposed regulations provide 2 weekends of quota (2) turkey hunting opportunity. Proposed regulations maximize small game hunting opportunity at 197 days	The acquisition of this 876-acre tract in Seminole County enhances access to state-owned public lands. Proposals establish regulated hunting opportunities on this new area.

SUBJECT	PROPOSED CHANGE	CURRENT REGULATION	CHANGE	JUSTIFICATION
	any day of the season thereafter. Provides season long small game opportunity.		and dove hunting at 75 days.	
391-4-2-.74 Specialty Hunts on Department-managed Lands.	The department can host or sponsor, or work with NGOs to host or sponsor specialty hunts, mobility-impaired hunts, or hunt-and-learns on department-managed lands	The department must schedule these opportunities at least two years in advance and propose them through a 3-month administrative process.	The department has the authority to schedule, plan, and carry out these hunts without an administrative burden.	These hunts are often co-hosted with conservation and hunting NGOs requiring volunteer coordination, planning, and other activities that do not conform well to rulemaking processes involving hunt scheduling and logistics. This change allows the department working closely with volunteers to schedule and implement these hunts on an impromptu or short-term timeframe that is not allowed by the current process.

(STRIKETHROUGH VERSION)

**RULES
OF
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

**CHAPTER 391-4
WILDLIFE RESOURCES DIVISION**

**SUBJECT 391-4-2
HUNTING REGULATIONS**

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391-4-2-.31	Fox, Grouse, Opossum, Quail, Rabbit, Raccoon, Squirrel, Bobcat
391-4-2-.72	Provisional Regulations for Recently Acquired Wildlife Management Areas
391-4-2-.74	Special Opportunity Hunts on Department-managed Lands

Rule 391-4-2-.31. Fox, Grouse, Opossum, Quail, Rabbit, Raccoon, Squirrel, Bobcat

(1) The following species may be hunted in accordance with the areas, seasons, and daily bag limits set forth below, except as otherwise specifically provided herein:

Species	Area	Season	Bag Limit
(a) Bobcat	Statewide	Dec. 1 through last day in February	No Limit
(b) Fox	Statewide	Dec. 1 through last day in February	No Limit
(c) Grouse	Statewide	Oct. 15 through last day in February	Daily: 3
(d) Opossum	Department- managed lands:	August 15 through the last day of February	No Limit
	All other lands:	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	No Limit

(e) Quail	Statewide	First Saturday after Nov. 11 <u>Second</u> <u>Saturday in</u> <u>November</u> through last day in February	Daily: 12
(f) Rabbit	Statewide	First Saturday after Nov. 11 through last day in February	Daily: 12
(g) Raccoon	Department- managed lands:	August 15 through the last day of February	No Limit
	All other lands:	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	No Limit
(h) Squirrel	Statewide	August 15 through last day in February	Daily: 12

(2) Hunting with dogs is allowed.

Authority: O.C.G.A. Secs. 27-1-4, 27-3-15.

391-4-2-.72 Provisional Regulations for Recently Acquired Wildlife Management Areas.

(1) Rules 391-4-2-.60 through 391-4-2-.68 apply to the wildlife management areas (WMA), herein, except as otherwise prescribed by the department.

(2) For the wildlife management areas herein, the department is authorized to prescribe hunt types, weapons restrictions, bag limits, antler restrictions, and any other special limitations, and to annually publish the same.

(3) Cochrans Creek WMA

(a) Deer may be hunted during the following dates as prescribed by the department:

1. From the 2nd Saturday in September through 29 days thereafter.

2. From the 1st Thursday after October 20 through 4 days thereafter.

3. From the 1st Wednesday after October 31 through 4 days thereafter.

4. From the 1st Thursday after Thanksgiving through 3 days thereafter.

5. From the 1st Monday after December 5 through the 2nd Sunday in January.

(b) Small game may be hunted during state small game seasons except during firearms deer hunts.

(c) Turkey may be hunted from the 1st Saturday after April 2 through May 15.

(4) Featherfield WMA

(a) Deer may be hunted during the state deer seasons using archery only.

(b) Dove may be hunted the first, second, and third Saturdays in September and thereafter any day during the state dove seasons.

(c) Small game, except bobwhite quail, may be hunted during state small game seasons.

(d) Turkey may be hunted during the first two Saturdays and Sundays after April 2.

Authority O.C.G.A. Secs. 27-1-4, 27-3-15.

Rule 391-4-2-.74 Special Opportunity Hunts on Department-managed Lands.

The department may authorize a specialty hunt, mobility-impaired hunt, or hunt-and-learn event on any department-managed land within the season frameworks established in O.C.G.A. Sec. 27-3-15. Additionally, the department may close such land in whole or in part to other access or use when conducting such hunts or events and shall publish any such hunts, events, or closures and post notice at the site or area.

Authority O.C.G.A. Sec. 27-1-4.

(CLEAN VERSION)

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	All other lands:	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	No Limit
(e) Quail	Statewide	Second Saturday in November	Daily: 12

		through last day in February	
(f) Rabbit	Statewide	First Saturday after Nov. 11 through last day in February	Daily: 12
(g) Raccoon	Department-managed lands:	August 15 through the last day of February	No Limit
	All other lands:	Jan. 1 – Dec. 31	No Limit
(h) Squirrel	Statewide	August 15 through last day in February	Daily: 12

(2) Hunting with dogs is allowed.

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Authority O.C.G.A. Sec. 27-1-4.