

**HUNTING AND HABITAT MANAGEMENT:
A SURVEY OF PRIVATE LANDOWNERS
IN FLORIDA**

Prepared for

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Prepared by

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INTRODUCTION AND METHODS

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) contracted with Jay Rayburn, Ph.D., in the Department of Communications at Florida State University to conduct a public opinion survey of private landowners in Florida. The purpose of the survey was to improve FWC's understanding of the availability of private lands for hunting, how species are being harvested on private lands, and how populations and habitats are being managed on private lands.

A list of landowners was obtained from the Florida Department of Revenue tax data 1998, which is distributed by the Florida Geographic Data Library. Data were available and useable for 64 of 67 counties. No useable data were available for Citrus, Gulf, and Martin counties. For each parcel in a county, the database provided the landowner's name and address, the parcel's geographic location, and its acreage.

The original database included more than 1 million parcels. This number was reduced by eliminating parcels less than one-half section in size (320 acres). Remaining parcels owned by the same landowner were grouped. All groups of parcels and individual parcels larger than 5,000 acres were omitted. The FWC staff determined data for these parcels could be obtained more efficiently by other means. This resulted in a database of names and addresses of 7,207 landowners with parcels between 320 and 5,000 acres.

Names and addresses were submitted to Bluegrass Mailing of Lexington, KY, which used computer programs of databases to match names and addresses with telephone numbers. The service was able to match telephone numbers for 1,830 landowners from the 7,207 names obtained from the Florida Geographic Data Library. The phone bank attempted to reach all of the 1,830 numbers. The distribution of respondents by aggregated land size appears in Appendix A.

Although tax records indicated that an individual owned at least 320 acres, some said the largest parcel they owned was less than 320 acres while others said they owned more than 4,999 acres. These individuals were excluded from the analysis.

Telephone interviews were conducted during fall, 1999 by trained interviewers at Oppenheim Research located in Tallahassee, Florida. A copy of the questionnaire appears in Appendix B of this report. Appendix C displays the description of land holdings of participants in the sample based on their responses. The table displaying completion rates for the sample appears in Appendix D. The distribution of responses for each question appears in Appendix E.

In Appendix E, 'DK' indicates the respondent said he or she "did not know" the answer to a specific question; 'NA' indicates the respondent was "not asked" a specific question because of his or her answer to some previous question. For example, respondents who said they did not permit hunting on their land were not asked the questions pertaining to hunting deer or turkeys.

Unless noted, frequency distributions of responses for each question are only for those individuals who offered an opinion to a given question. Each table also displays the number of respondents on which the percentages were calculated (N =), and the number of the question in the survey relating to the data in the table (Q.). In some instances where noted, sample sizes are small. Any interpretations and generalizations to the population from these tables should be made with caution.

RESULTS

Initially respondents were asked if they permitted hunting on their land, and, if they did not permit hunting, the reason that hunting was prohibited. Table 1 displays these results.

Table 1
Hunting on Property

<u>Category</u>	<u>Percent</u>
hunting permitted	59
hunting not permitted	41

n = 588 (Q. 5)

reason not permitted

land not suitable for hunting	28
don't like hunting	26
concerned about liability	17
like wildlife	8
no game in area	4
all other reasons	17

n = 240 (Q. 6)

Fifty-nine percent of respondents say they permit hunting on their property. Of the 41% who do not permit hunting, 28% say the land is not suitable for hunting, 26% do not like hunting, 17% are concerned about liability, 8% like wildlife, and 4% say there is no game in the area.

Deer Hunting

The next series of questions concerned deer hunting. First, respondents were asked if they permitted deer hunting on their property, and, if they did, if there were any restrictions placed on who could hunt. Table 2 displays these results.

Table 2
Deer Hunting Permitted

<u>Category</u>	<u>Percent</u>
yes	85
no	15

n = 339 (Q. 7)

restrictions on who can hunt

yes	94
no	6

n = 287 (Q.8)

Eighty-five percent of all respondents who allow hunting said they permitted deer hunting on their property. Of that 85%, 94% say they place some restrictions on who could hunt. These individuals were asked who was permitted to hunt deer. The results are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3
Who Permitted to Hunt Deer

<u>Category</u>	<u>Percent</u>
owner and/or family & friends	90
people who asked to hunt	21
people or groups leasing property	23

n = 269 (Q. 9-11)

Most (90%) said that only the owner and his or her family and friends were permitted to hunt deer, while about one-fifth (21%) said people who asked or people leasing the property (23%) could hunt.

If the respondents said people or groups who leased the property were permitted to hunt, they were then asked the basis on which the land was leased, and the per acre fee charged for the lease. These results are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4
Basis and Cost of Leasing

<u>Category</u>	<u>Percent</u>
seasonally or yearly	94
leased daily or weekly	3
some other basis	3

n = 61 (Q. 12) NOTE: Sample size is small and should be interpreted cautiously.

Almost all who leased their property (94%) said they leased it seasonally or yearly.

All individuals who permitted deer hunting were asked during which season they permitted hunting, and if they permitted hunting with dogs. These results are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5
Season Deer Hunting Permitted

<u>Category</u>	<u>Percent</u>
archery	64
muzzleloading	60
general gun season	99

n = 287 (Q. 14-16)

entire general gun season	88
only part of general gun season	12

n = 276 (Q. 17)

permit hunting with dogs	26
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n = 287 (Q. 18)

Of respondents who permitted deer hunting, 64% said they permitted hunting in archery season and 60% said during muzzleloading season. Of the 99% who said they permitted hunting in the general gun season, 88% permit deer hunting for the entire season while

12% permit hunting in only part of the season. Just over one-fourth (26%) permit hunting with dogs.

Those who permitted deer hunting were also asked about other restrictions in force. These results are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6
Other Restrictions on Hunting Deer

<u>Restrictions on</u>	<u>Percent</u>
antler size	31
number of deer taken	32
both antler size and number taken	< 1
harvesting of does permitted	48

n = 287 (Q. 19-21)

enrolled in Antlerless Program 40

n = 136 (Q. 22)

NOTE: Sample size is small and should be interpreted cautiously.

Thirty-one percent of those who permit deer hunting have restrictions on antler size. Most of these individuals said their restrictions were the same as the legal size restrictions. Thirty-two percent place restrictions on the number of deer taken. Of these, most say they conform to the legal restrictions. Just under one-half (48%) say they permit the harvesting of does. Forty percent of these individuals say they are enrolled in the Antlerless Deer Program.

Turkey Hunting

The next series of questions dealt with turkey hunting. First, respondents were asked if they permitted turkey hunting on their property, and, if they did, if there were any restrictions placed on who could hunt. Table 7 displays these results.

Table 7
Turkey Hunting Permitted

<u>Category</u>	<u>Percent</u>
yes	53
no	47 *

* 37% of these indicated there were no turkeys in the area

n = 337 (Q. 23-24)

restrictions on who can hunt

yes	93
no	7

n = 181 (Q. 25)

Just over one-half (53%) who allow hunting said they permitted turkey hunting on their property. Individuals who said turkey hunting did not occur were asked if there were turkeys in the area; 37% said there were none in the area. Almost all of these individuals (93%) said there were restrictions on who was permitted to hunt. Individuals who said they restricted who could hunt were asked to specify their restrictions. These results are displayed in Table 8.

Table 8
Who Permitted to Hunt Turkey

<u>Category</u>	<u>Percent</u>
owner and/or family & friends	86
people who asked to hunt	10
people or groups leasing property	25

n = 168 (Q. 26-28)

Most (86%) said that only the owner and his or her family and friends were permitted to hunt deer, while 10% said people who asked or people leasing the property (25%) could hunt.

If the respondents said people or groups who leased the property were permitted to hunt, they were then asked the basis on which the land was leased, and the per acre fee charged for the lease. These results are displayed in Table 9.

Table 9
Basis and Cost of Leasing

<u>Category</u>	<u>Percent</u>
both fall and spring	62
spring season only	13
daily or weekly	10
fall season only	8
on some other basis	7

n = 42 (Q. 29)

NOTE: Sample size is small and should be interpreted cautiously.

About two-thirds (62%) who leased their property said they leased it for both fall and spring seasons; 13% lease spring only; 10% lease daily or weekly; 8% lease fall only; and 7% lease on some other basis.

Individuals who permitted hunting were asked in which seasons hunting was permitted, if rifle hunting was permitted, and if harvesting of jakes was permitted. These results are displayed in Table 10.

Table 10
Seasons and Restrictions on Turkey Hunting

<u>Category</u>	<u>Percent</u>
season hunting occurs	
fall	13
spring	29
both fall and spring	58
rifle hunting permitted	
yes	44
no	56
harvesting of jakes permitted	
yes	58
no	42

n = 179 (Q. 31-33)

More than one-half of respondents who permit turkey hunting (58%) permit hunting in both fall and spring; 29% permit spring hunting only, and 13% permit fall hunting only. Forty-four percent permit turkey hunting with a rifle, and 58% permit harvesting of jakes.

Types of Hunting on Property

All respondents were read a list of other different types of game that could be hunted and asked if hunting for that species occurred on their property. These results are displayed in Table 11.

Table 11
Types of Game Hunted

<u>Category</u>	<u>Percent</u>
doves	57
quail	42
squirrels	38
wild hogs	38
ducks	30
rabbits	23

n = 588 (Q. 34-39)

For only one species--doves--did more than one-half (57%) say hunting for this species occurred on their property. Forty-two percent said quail hunting occurred, 38% said squirrel hunting occurred, 38% said wild hog hunting occurred, 30% said duck hunting occurred, and 23% said rabbit hunting occurred.

Land Cover and Habitat Management

The next set of questions dealt with land cover and types of habitat management. These results are displayed in Table 12. The results are displayed for all respondents (Total), and by whether the landowner permits or does not permit hunting. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of people answering a particular question. The data indicating the distributions for hunted and non-hunted lands appear in Appendix F.

Table 12
Land Cover and Habitat Management

<u>Category</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percent</u>	
		<u>Hunting</u>	<u>No Hunting</u>
primary land cover (Q. 40)	(579)	(337)	(240)
trees or forests	56	65	44
improved pasture	19	14	27
farmed land	13	9	17
unimproved pasture	6	7	6
non-forested wetland	5	6	4
developed land	1	<1	1
habitat managed for wildlife (Q. 41)	(578)	(332)	(237)
yes	37	49	20
no	63	51	80
types of habitat management (Q. 42-44)			
food plots or plantings	81 (210)	88 (143)	57 (26)
feeders	59 (210)	63 (102)	46 (21)
dove fields	30 (210)	33 (55)	17 (8)

The primary type of land cover is trees or forest (56%) followed by improved pastures (19%), farmed land (13%), unimproved pasture (6%), non-forested wetland (5%), and developed land (1%). Just over one-third (37%) of all respondents said some type of habitat management for wildlife occurred on the property. Eighty-one percent of these individuals indicated food plots or plantings were on the land, 59% said feeders, and 30% said dove fields.

Land Ownership, Location, and Assistance

Finally, respondents were asked if how the land was owned, if any part of it was in a licensed game preserve, and if it was enrolled in any type of natural resource financial assistance program. These results are displayed in Table 13. The results are displayed for all respondents (Total), and by whether the landowner permits or does not permit hunting. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of people answering a particular question. The data indicating the distributions for hunted and non-hunted lands appear in Appendix G.

Table 13
Description of Land

<u>Category</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percent</u>	
		<u>Hunting</u>	<u>No Hunting</u>
how owned (Q. 46)	(581)	(337)	(240)
privately	87	91	83
by a trust	7	4	9
by a corporation	5	4	7
by a non-profit organization	1	<1	1
in game preserve (Q. 47)	(578)	(337)	(240)
yes	4	5	2
no	96	95	98
in financial assistance program (Q. 45)	(582)	(337)	(240)
no	89	89	91
yes, Forest Stewardship Program	4	5	4
yes, Federal Farm Bill Program	1	2	0
yes, in both	1	1	2
yes, in some other program	5	3	3

Most land is held privately (87%). Seven percent is owned by a trust, 5% by a corporation, and 1% by a non-profit organization. Most of the land (96%) is not in a licensed game preserve. Most of the land (89%) is in no type of financial assistance program.

Appendix A

DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE BY
SIZE OF LAND OWNED

<u>Size of Land</u>	<u>% in Sample</u>
320-499	45
500-899	29
900-4999	26

Appendix B

Hello, my name is _____. I'm calling from the Communication Research Center at Florida State University for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (formerly the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission). May I please speak to _____.

(IF THE PERSON IS NOT AT HOME, FIND OUT WHEN HE OR SHE WILL RETURN, NOTE, AND CALL BACK. WHEN THE CORRECT PERSON IS ON THE PHONE, CONTINUE.)

We are conducting a survey about hunting on private lands in Florida. Your name was selected at random, and let me assure you that your answers will remain strictly confidential. Let me also assure you we are not selling anything. We are just asking people about their opinions and practices concerning hunting on their property. The information you provide will help the Commission better manage wildlife in Florida.

Property records indicate that you own at least 320 acres in Florida. Is this correct? (IF CORRECT, CONTINUE. IF NOT, ASK WHY NOT, CODE, AND TERMINATE.)

1. Is your land contained in one contiguous parcel, or do you own more than one parcel?

_____ 1 in one parcel (ASK Q2))

_____ 3 in more than one parcel (SKIP TO 3)

2. How many acres are there in this parcel? _____ acres

3. How many acres are there in the largest contiguous parcel you own?

_____ acres

4. What county is this land in? _____ (SEE CODING SHEET)

5. The rest of the questions in this survey will deal with this piece of land. On how many acres in this parcel do you permit hunting?

(IF HUNTING IS NOT PERMITTED ON ANY, ASK 6. IF HUNTING IS PERMITTED ON AT LEAST SOME, SKIP TO 7.)

6. Why do you not permit hunting?

_____ 01 land not suitable (ASK WHY?) _____

_____ 03 do not like hunting

_____ 05 liability/insurance concerns

_____ 07 don't know enough about hunting

_____ 09 other (RECORD) _____

_____ 99 NA

(NOW SKIP TO QUESTION 40)

Are you the person who makes decisions about how your land is hunted and managed, or is there someone else such as a relative, a manager or a lessee we should speak with?

(IF THIS IS THE DECISION-MAKER, CONTINUE. IF NOT, ASK FOR THE NAME AND PHONE NUMBER OF THAT PERSON. CONTACT THAT PERSON TO ASK THE REMAINING QUESTIONS. THANK THIS PERSON AND TERMINATE.)

(IF YOU HAVE TO CONTACT SOMEONE ELSE, READ THE FOLLOWING)

Hello, my name is _____. I'm calling from the Communication Research Center at Florida State University for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (formerly the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission). May I please speak to _____.

We are conducting a survey about hunting on private lands in Florida. I got your name from _____ regarding a piece of property in Florida. Let me assure you that your answers will remain strictly confidential. Let me also assure you we are not selling anything. We are just asking people about their opinions and practices concerning hunting on private property. The information you provide will help the Commission better manage wildlife in Florida.

7. Does deer hunting occur on this property?

_____ 1 yes (ASK 8)

_____ 3 no (SKIP TO 23)

_____ 9 NA (SKIP TO 23)

8. Are any restrictions placed on who may hunt deer on this property?

_____ 1 yes (ASK 9)

_____ 3 no (SKIP TO 14)

_____ 9 NA (SKIP TO 14)

Who of the following are permitted to hunt deer on this property...
(NOTE ALL THAT APPLY)

9. the owner and/or family and friends only

_____ 1 yes

_____ 3 no

_____ 9 NA

10. other people who ask to hunt on the property

_____ 1 yes

_____ 3 no

_____ 9 NA

11. people or groups who lease the property

_____ 1 yes (ASK 12)

_____ 3 no (SKIP TO 18)

_____ 9 NA (SKIP TO 18)

12. You indicated the land is leased. On which basis is the land generally leased for deer hunting ...

_____ 1 daily or weekly, (SKIP TO 14)

_____ 3 seasonally or yearly, or (ASK 13)

_____ 5 on some other basis (SKIP TO 14)

_____ 9 NA (SKIP TO 14)

13. What is the per acre lease fee?

During which of the following seasons do you permit deer hunting on the property...

14. archery season

_____ 1 yes _____ 3 no _____ 9 NA

15. muzzleloading season

_____ 1 yes _____ 3 no _____ 9 NA

16. general gun season (IF YES, ASK 17)

_____ 1 yes _____ 3 no _____ 9 NA

17. During the general gun season, do you permit hunting for the whole season, or just part of the season?

_____ 1 whole season

_____ 3 part of season

_____ 9 NA

18. Is hunting with dogs permitted?

_____ 1 yes _____ 3 no _____ 9 NA

Are there any restrictions placed on ...

19. antler size of the deer

_____ 1 no

_____ 3 yes (SPECIFY _____)

_____ 9 NA

20. number of deer taken

_____ 1 no

_____ 3 yes (SPECIFY _____)

_____ 9 NA

21. Do you permit the harvesting of does?

_____ 1 yes (ASK 22)

_____ 3 no (SKIP TO 23)

_____ 9 NA (SKIP TO 23)

22. Do you receive tags from the Commission to harvest does during hunting season, that is, are you enrolled in the Antlerless Deer Program?

_____ 1 yes _____ 3 no _____ 9 NA

23. Does turkey hunting occur on the property?

_____ 1 yes (SKIP TO 25)

_____ 3 no (ASK 24, THEN SKIP TO 34)

_____ 9 NA (SKIP TO 34)

24. Are there wild turkeys in the area?

_____ 1 yes _____ 3 no _____ 9 NA

(NOW SKIP TO 34)

25. Are any restrictions placed on who may hunt turkeys on this property?

_____ 1 yes (ASK 26)

_____ 3 no (SKIP TO 31)

_____ 9 NA (SKIP TO 31)

Who of the following are permitted to hunt turkeys on this property...

26. the owner and/or family and friends only

_____ 1 yes

_____ 3 no

_____ 9 NA

27. other people who ask to hunt on the property

_____ 1 yes

_____ 3 no

_____ 9 NA

28. people or groups who lease the property

_____ 1 yes (ASK 29)

_____ 3 no (SKIP TO 31)

_____ 9 NA (SKIP TO 31)

29. You indicated the land is leased. On which basis is the land generally leased for turkey hunting ..

_____ 01 daily or weekly, (SKIP TO 31)

_____ 03 spring season only (ASK 30)

_____ 05 fall season only (ASK 30)

_____ 07 both fall and spring (ASK 30)

_____ 09 or some other basis (ASK 30)

_____ 99 NA (SKIP TO 31)

30. What is the per acre lease fee?

31. Does turkey hunting occur during the fall or spring seasons?

_____ 1 fall

_____ 3 spring

_____ 5 both fall and spring

_____ 9 NA

32. Is rifle hunting of turkey permitted?
_____ 1 yes _____ 3 no _____ 9 NA

33. Is the harvest of jakes (young males/gobblers) permitted?
_____ 1 yes _____ 3 no _____ 9 NA

Which of the following species are hunted on the property...

34. quail _____ 1 yes _____ 3 no _____ 9 NA

35. doves _____ 1 yes _____ 3 no _____ 9 NA

36. ducks _____ 1 yes _____ 3 no _____ 9 NA

37. rabbits _____ 1 yes _____ 3 no _____ 9 NA

38. squirrels _____ 1 yes _____ 3 no _____ 9 NA

39. wild hogs _____ 1 yes _____ 3 no _____ 9 NA

40. There are different types of cover that may appear on land. Of all the different types of cover, what is the PRIMARY or PREDOMINATE type of cover on this land...

_____ 01 trees or forests

_____ 03 unimproved pastures

_____ 05 improved pastures

_____ 07 non-forested wetland

_____ 09 farmed land, or

_____ 11 developed land

_____ 99 NA

41. Is any habitat management for wildlife implemented on this land?

_____ 1 yes (ASK 42)

_____ 3 no (SKIP TO 45)

_____ 9 NA (SKIP TO 45)

Are any of the following types of habitat management used on this land...

42. _____ food plots or plantings _____ 1 yes _____ 3 no _____ 9 NA

43. _____ dove fields _____ 1 yes _____ 3 no _____ 9 NA

44. _____ feeders _____ 1 yes _____ 3 no _____ 9 NA

45. Is this land enrolled in any type of natural resource financial assistance program?
(IF YES ASK: Which one or ones?)

- _____ 01 no
- _____ 03 yes, Forest Stewardship Program
- _____ 05 yes, Federal Farm Bill Program
- _____ 07 yes, in both
- _____ 09 other (SPECIFY _____)
- _____ 99 NA

46. How is this land owned? Is it owned ...

- _____ 1 privately
- _____ 3 by a corporation
- _____ 5 by a trust, or
- _____ 7 by a non-profit organization
- _____ 9 NA

47. Is any of this property in a licensed game preserve?

- _____ 1 yes
- _____ 3 no
- _____ 9 NA

This concludes the survey. Thank you for your time and answers.

Interviewer ID Number _____

Phone Number _____

Size of Land from Printout _____

Appendix C

DESCRIPTION OF LAND HOLDINGS

<u>Category</u>	<u>Percent</u>
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land holdings by parcel

in 1 parcel	42
in more than 1 parcel	58
n = 588	
Q. 1	

number of acres in parcel

range	320-4500
average	795
median	500
n = 226	
Q. 2	

number of acres in largest contiguous parcel

range	320-4350
average	833
median	550
n = 205	
Q. 3	

number of acres where hunting permitted

range	0 to 4500
average	378
median	180
n = 567	
Q. 5	

Appendix D

COMPLETION RATES FOR THE SAMPLE

Total number of landowners	7207
Total of telephone numbers identified	1830
Ineligible numbers, no-answers, disconnected numbers, wrong numbers	876
Adjusted potential numbers	954
Refusals and break-offs	366 (38% of potential numbers)
Completed interviews	588 (62% completion rate)

Appendix E

Appendix F

Appendix G