

Land Evaluation — Hunting FAQs

1. What lands are the District currently evaluating for additional hunting opportunities?

A. This year the District is evaluating eight District-managed properties for additional hunting opportunities. They are:

- Chassahowitzka River and Coastal Swamps
- Cypress Creek Preserve
- Portions of the Lower Hillsborough Wilderness Preserve
- Non-Wildlife Management Area (WMA) lands in the Green Swamp East
- Non-WMA lands in the Green Swamp West
- Non-WMA lands in Lake Panasoffkee
- Hálpata Tastanaki Preserve
- Weekiwachee Preserve

2. What types of additional hunting opportunities are being considered?

A. All forms of hunting, except free-ranging dogs, are being considered. This includes archery, muzzleloader and modern gun.

3. How are these lands being evaluated?

A. District staff is collaborating with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) in the evaluation of the properties based on approved criteria.

4. What are the evaluation criteria?

A. The criteria being used to evaluate District lands for potential hunting opportunities include:

- FWC's ability to manage hunts
- Budget impacts
- Adjoining land uses
- Internal infrastructure
- Security challenges
- Sufficient access
- Sufficient acreage
- Resource management/ecological conditions
- Sustainability
- Balancing demand
- Regional demand/adjacency

5. How were the evaluation criteria developed?

A. Staff held multiple public workshops to discuss evaluation criteria. At one public meeting earlier this year, staff worked with more than 40 residents to compile a comprehensive list of evaluation criteria. Included in this meeting were representatives from environmental groups, hunting and other recreational groups, and local governments, as well as conservationists and interested members of the public.

6. Who evaluates the lands?

A. District and FWC land managers and biologists are evaluating the lands.

7. What is the process for approving these changes to hunting opportunities?

A. After the evaluation, if staff determines that a property could accommodate additional hunting opportunities, there is a set process for receiving approval. The property's individual land management plan will need to be amended, which will require both a public meeting to address citizen concerns and approval at the District's 13-member Governing Board meeting, where residents are welcome to attend and comment.

8. How will the public be notified of these potential changes to the lands?

A. Public meetings will be held to amend the management plans for each property where expanded hunting is proposed. All meetings are open to the public and updates will be posted on the District's website at www.WaterMatters.org/recreation/hunt_evaluation/. Residents can also submit comments about the evaluation when they visit this webpage.

9. Have there been any additional lands opened to hunting?

A. No. To date, no recommendations have been made. Any final recommended changes will be discussed at public meetings and ultimately presented to the District's 13-member Governing Board for consideration. Public comment will be accepted at all meetings.

10. When will any changes occur?

A. No changes would go into effect prior to the 2012–13 hunting season, which begins September 2012.

11. Are there safety concerns associated with additional hunting opportunities on public lands?

A. All hunts are managed by FWC. Before opening an area for hunting, FWC studies the land and its surrounding properties to evaluate the safe types, locations and durations of hunts. This allows for the most enjoyable and the safest experience possible. In addition, Florida law requires any person born after 1975 to complete and pass the state hunter safety course before purchasing a hunting license. The District also considers the safety of all residents when evaluating any recreational opportunity on public lands.

12. Will any District trails be closed if additional hunting opportunities are approved by the Governing Board for the current eight tracts under evaluation?

A. Only one trail closure would occur if spring turkey hunting is approved for the northern portion of the Chassahowitzka property. The two-mile trail segment is designated for hiking and the closure would last no more than 14 days.