

FSCA Newsletter



Dear Members,

It has been a highly productive year for the board. Through our annual events and successful partnerships with local agencies, we have reached significant goals that benefit both our current members and future generations. I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your continued support and for the board's dedication to these initiatives.

I am also pleased to announce that we have successfully established a building on our property. Having a permanent home base for our club is a major milestone that will better enable us to gather and connect. We are currently working to finalize the remaining details and will provide further updates as they become available.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to our club. I wish you all a safe and pleasant summer.

Best regards,

Matt Nelson
FSCA President

Upcoming Events

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FAA Unity Weekend

7/10-7/12/2026

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FSCA General Meeting

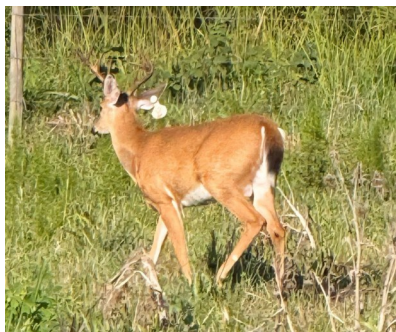
7/14/2026

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FSCA Board Meeting

7/28/2026

FSCA calendar updated weekly on
FSCA1994.com



2024-2025 YOUTH HUNTS

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Everglades Python Hunt

7/24-7/26/2026

Everglades Deer
Reintroduction Project

Everglades Deer Reintroduction Project

By Bishop Wright

Everglades Deer Reintroduction Project: Data, Partnerships, and Results

Fifteen years ago, FSCA joined the Everglades Headwaters effort to expand public access and strengthen habitat across Florida. A major milestone was the creation of the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area, which authorized U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acquisitions across the region. After the MOU with FWC, the Sportsmen's Trust Group advocated for access and hunting rules aligned with Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area. That approach helped shape the opportunities sportsmen benefit from today, though it drew plenty of criticism along the way. But steady focus and real collaboration built something lasting. Today, FSCA leadership is proud of what this group has accomplished together. And here we go again, stepping out of the box and doing what gladesmen have always done when it's time to solve a problem: act, adapt, and improve. With today's science and technology, we can gather data and learn more than we ever thought we knew while remembering that critics are always part of the story.

Why Add More Deer—And Why Now?

When people hear about the Everglades Deer Reintroduction Project, two questions come up right away: Why add more deer to the Everglades?

And if deer are disappearing, why keep moving them?

The short answer is that deer seem to have vanished, and there are multiple theories about why, ranging from water management and habitat conditions to predator pressure and food availability.

Then there's the old saying: Why throw good money after bad? Why move more deer before solving the underlying problems first? That's exactly why this project is tied to broader work, including water restoration efforts and wildlife management actions happening at the same time. The data and research derived from this project will help wildlife managers make better decisions well into the future. Private donors, NGOs, tribes, and generous individuals and organizations—including FSCA—provide the funding for this effort.

Water Restoration and the Predator/Forage Picture

For years, teams have worked to move the water south as part of Everglades restoration, including work around the new Blue Shanty flow-way. Hopefully, plumbing and hydrology issues will continue to improve as intended, improving conditions that deer and other wildlife depend on.

On the predator side, the project also reintroduced wild hogs. Keep in mind: while predator management strategies are part of the landscape conversation, other efforts have targeted hogs aggressively, often with no practical retention structure. When hogs were being removed at that pace, it didn't take long for hog numbers to decline. Reintroducing nearly 300 hogs changes the food availability for predators, giving them another option besides deer. That matters when the goal is to understand which conditions lead to stability and which lead to decline.

The SFWMD Recreational Meeting (June 22, 2026)

At the SFWMD Recreational Meeting on June 22, 2026, the Cypress Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America co-hosted an outstanding presentation with Miccosukee Tribe's Fish & Wildlife Director, Dr. Marcel Bozas. Cypress Chapter Executive Director Mike Elfenbein, along with Dr. Marcel Bozas, shared project details and demonstrated real dedication to the effort.

Sportsmen are proud of the teams commitment and steady focus, especially while facing criticism. If you missed the meeting, FSCA encourages you to review the project and its data. The work is serious, and the results are built for the long run.

Everglades Deer Reintroduction Project Cont

By Bishop Wright

The Eight-Point Buck Story: Why It Matters

When people critique reintroduction efforts, one story often comes up: an eight- point buck moved from the north side of Alligator Alley (I-75) to the Indian lands on the south side. The claim is that it didn't But the bucks behavior suggests something different. The part worth focusing on is what happened next: he adapted to the new habitat and later made his way back across the Alley, finding his way home. Out of the 42 deer referenced in that discussion, he's the only one of two deer associated with crossing back. The other returned to the area just north of where it was released. That alone raises questions worth studying: how did he navigate? How did he learn the area? And what does it suggest about instinct and habitat use in this region? In the woods, smart deer and big bucks can surprise you every time. And the lesson remains the same: deer Aren't just animals. They respond, they adapt, and they reveal what the habitat can support.

The Release Area, Highway Barriers, and Monitoring

As deer and hogs dispersed across the landscape, they were living within the habitat they came from on the other side of the highway. And this matters because Alligator Alley includes panther fencing on both sides. The only practical crossings are wildlife tunnels designed for animals to move beneath the interstate. A majority of the doe deer released had fawns, matching the original plan. The animals are tagged, and some have monitoring collars and/or GPS ear tags. This effort will be an ongoing study for 2-5 years with annual updates. The first annual report will be released in January, and FSCA leadership is looking forward to seeing those results and building on what the project learns. This effort is funded with private, NGO, and tribal dollars, and by the good people and organizations that donated to the cause, FSCA included. This years reintroduction also includes a retention focus. The team is ready to capitalize on lessons learned and improve outcomes from now on.

Acknowledging Criticism—And Keeping the Evidence Front and Center

When criticism shows up, it often comes from people who don't have the full picture. It's worth remembering what the conditions looked like before the work: there were no deer in this particular area, no hogs to speak of, and small mammals were nonexistent. Today, that has changed. The real question becomes what the data shows next: what helps wildlife persist and what adjustments lead to stability. FSCA leadership is proud to take part in this step to make a change even when it comes with heat from those who do nothing but criticize. The difference is simple: action builds results, and results build trust.

Thanks to the Partners

FSCA leadership is excited and proud to be involved with the partners who made this possible, including the Cypress Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America, the International Order of T. Roosevelt, Seminole Tribe and Miccosukee Tribes; science teams, Florida Power & Light, Garcia Farms, as well as Liesa Priddy & JB Ranch, Howell & Cleckler Families, and the Cabela Family Foundation. Thank you for letting us tag along with such outstanding partners. This kind of work doesn't happen by accident it is built through collaboration, persistence, and a shared commitment to Florida's outdoor heritage.

Close: The Everglades are still an ecosystem that demands patience, planning, and proof. With science, field experience, and coordinated partners, this project is moving from debate to answers one season at a time.

Florida Airboat Association (FAA) Quarterly Meeting

To all Airboaters, you are personally invited to join the leadership of the airboating community at the FAA quarterly meeting. This years unity weekend will kick off with the FAA quarterly meeting on Fridy evening at the KOA Convention Center.

- ◆ **Date:** Friday, July 10, 2026**
- ◆ **Time:** 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.**
- ◆ **Location:** KOA Campground, Okeechobee**

Agenda:

- ◆ - Clubs from around the state will participate.
- ◆ - Nominations for next year's board and officers.
- ◆ - Several roundtable discussions on airboat issues throughout the state.

Additional Information:

- ◆ - Swamp Cracker BBQ & Catering will provide dinner.
- ◆ - The meeting is open to everyone interested in participating.
- ◆ - This is the biggest meeting of the year, and your input is valuable to understanding FAA's efforts for the airboating community.

Please pass this invitation along to others who might be interested. For more information, contact **President Tom Schmidt**. Looking forward to seeing everyone there!

Saturday Morning Airboat Ride

For those interested in airboat riding in the hay fields of Lake Okeechobee with local airboaters from LOAA, this is the perfect opportunity. We're planning to meet on July 11, 2026 around 9 a.m

- ◆ **Launch Time:** Before 9 a.m.**
- ◆ **Location:** Okee-Tantie Boat Ramp**
- ◆ **Route: We will head west across the Kissimmee River into the hay fields of Lake Okeechobee.**
- ◆ **Gathering:** We will gather around the tin shed for a powwow at some point during the ride.**
- ◆ **Lunch:** Provided by LOAA/FAA.**

What to Expect:

- ◆ This will be an 30- to 40-mile airboat ride.
- ◆ Bring plenty of gas and water.
- ◆ There will be several stops along the way to chat with others and enjoy a day of airboating.

Florida Airboat Association (FAA) Quarterly Meeting Cont.

Sporting Clay Courses

We're planning to meet on July 11, 2026 around 9 a.m. at the Ok Corral Gun Club, located at 9449 N.E. 48th St., Okeechobee, FL 34927.

Suggested Items to Bring:

- ◆ Eye and ear protection (available for purchase at the club)
 - ◆ 100 rounds of #7 or #8 birdshot ammunition (also available for purchase at the club)
- We will rent golf carts to travel through the 15-station field, where you'll shoot 4 to 6 rounds at each station.

Sporting clays is a challenging target-shooting discipline that attracts shooting sports enthusiasts and hunters alike. As you progress through our two courses set in a picturesque Florida farm setting, you'll encounter a variety of targets that simulate the flight paths of game birds and other wild game.

The shoot will take approximately 2 1/2 hours. Afterward, we will go to lunch.

Saturday Poolside BBQ at KOA Campground

On Saturday, for everyone planning to hang out around the KOA campground, the FAA will host a poolside barbecue with hamburgers and hot dogs. Join us for camaraderie and fun!

- ◆ Date: Saturday, July 11, 2026
- ◆ Time: 12:00 p.m.
- ◆ Location: Main pool by the convention center at KOA Campground, Okeechobee

Notes:

- ◆ Bring the whole family—kids are welcome!
- ◆ For any questions, please contact Brad. Looking forward to seeing everyone there!

SFWMD Recreational Meeting

By Bishop Wright

Congratulations on becoming the new facilitator!

I can't thank everyone enough for your support. It truly means a lot. In this role, I've always known that staff puts a lot of work into these meetings, but last night I really got to see the inner workings, how they're built, and why they're so valuable to the users. It's clear the presentations are delivered with heart and soul, and I can see how much effort goes into making sure everyone gets something meaningful out of the session. And it can't be done without your help and support.

Fred Davis gave an excellent presentation on the Florida Trails Association. It was in depth, and I think we all learned something new about the organization something many of us may have taken for granted. Thank you, Fred, for giving it your all.

Annisa Karin provided an update on the 2026 Python Challenge, including an overview of how the challenge has progressed over the years.

The Everglades Deer Reintroduction Project was presented by the Izaak Walton League of America. Cypress Chapter President Mike Elfenbein, along with Dr. Marcel Bozas with the Fish and Wildlife department and representatives of the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, delivered an outstanding presentation. Their dedication and perseverance showed clearly in the details. Sportsmen are proud of the team's commitment and their steady focus even while facing criticism. The project's results demonstrate that actions speak louder than words. If you missed the meeting, I encourage you to review the project and its data, truly impressive and needed for a long time.

We ran about 30 minutes late, and the next two presenters were cut short on public comment. I really feel bad about that, and I'm sorry that nobody got to ask questions.

Eric Suarez, CrossDocs Research Program Coordinator at the University of Florida, gave an overview of the history, research, and management of invasive wildlife in Florida. I'm glad he was able to speed things up, and I also appreciated getting to talk with him before the meeting. The research and dedication deserve attention especially the challenge of balancing wildlife management across the impacts of invasive species.

Mike Cheef, Public Use Unit Section Leader for SFWMD, shared updates on recreation projects and facility updates. Highlights included: STA construction and reservoir overview, the Blue Shanty, Airboat Levee crossing, S-8A spillway and connector canal buggy berm, parking on Miami Canal, Allapattah Flats and hunting zone proposals, the Green Heart of the Everglades update on access points and parking areas, Loxahatchee River updates on Lainhart Dam repairs and improvements, and updates for Blanket Bay / Kissimmee River public use areas.

There was also an Earth Day project completed with FSCA, LOAA, and KRVSA: removing old fencing and debris, installing airboat and boundary signs, and removing over 100 yards of debris. The effort included 67 volunteers totaling 536 volunteer hours, with 15 buggies, five side-by-sides, two skid stairs, and two dump trailers. Lastly, ramp usage survey data collection is ongoing in the conservation areas something that's finally getting the attention it has been well needed for a long time.

Thank you again to everyone on zoom and in the room, we were blessed to have a great crowd. Sorry for the delay. I'll work to keep things moving a bit better, but this was an outstanding agenda with exceptional presenters. Looking forward to seeing everyone on September 28th your next rec meeting.

Thank you all for showing up and staying engaged these conversations keep improving recreation and access for everyone. Newton Cook, thank you for the dedication you gave us as facilitator of this meeting for multiple years. I know I have big shoes to fill, and I'm committed to doing my best to make you proud.

By Nikki McGoldrick, FSCA, All Rights Reserved

FSCA President Matt Nelson and fellow members joined Congressman Byron Donalds for an airboat tour of the northern region of Lake Okeechobee to discuss the restoration and revitalization work underway to protect one of Florida's most critical water resources.

Great ride on the lake with state representatives, FSCA members, local officials, and community leaders. Special thanks to Mike Elfenbien for the opportunity it was great to see so many key players and witness continued efforts to make the lake healthier again, including Florida Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Rodney Barreto and Executive Director Roger Young; SFWMD Board Member Ben Butler; Marcellus Osceola Jr, Chairman of the Seminole Tribe of Florida; conservation leader Nick Wiley; and State Representative Meg Weinberger; Florida House of Representatives Toby Overdorf.

Everyone got a firsthand look at the lake and discussed conservation, water management, and the future of Lake Okeechobee as a vital natural resource and water supply sharing local perspectives on the communities that depend on it. During the discussions, we focused on major restoration components: building and operating reservoirs, removing accumulated muck, and restoring native freshwater grasses essential to the lake's ecological health. We also highlighted the need for continued investment and coordinated management to improve water quality and ecosystem function across the region.

Proper Lake Okeechobee management matters to inland communities and to South Florida's estuaries, where balanced freshwater flows support fisheries and coastal habitat.

FSCA applauds Congressman Donalds for his commitment to advancing Florida water policy and helping secure the funding and support needed to keep these restoration projects moving forward.



6th Annual FSCA Fathers Day Fun Clay Shoot

Photos By: Sandra Effertz Photography



To learn more about our youth hunts or how to sign up please visit

<https://myfwc.com/education/programs/youth-hunting-program/>

Please like follow and share us on social media!



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6th Annual FSICA Fathers Day Fun Clay Shoot

Photos By: Sandra Effertz Photography



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