



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES CONSIDERING NATIVE FRESH- WATER TURTLE REGULATIONS

**** MEETING SET FOR JANUARY 25TH ****

The Issue:

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources is set to hold a meeting on Wednesday, January 25th to consider proposed rules, and public comment, regarding regulations to establish procedures for export, farming and sale of native fresh-water turtles. The rulemaking sets forth permit and recordkeeping requirements for individuals and commercial enterprises with more than 10 native fresh-water turtles.

The Impact:

Permits

This rulemaking makes it “unlawful for any person to engage in any commercial enterprise involving more than 10 native fresh-water turtles without a valid commercial turtle permit issued by the department”. “Commercial enterprise” is defined as “exporting, farming, buying, selling, exchanging, bartering or offering for purchase, sale, exchange or barter in order to derive income or other consideration”. Individual pet owners would also be prohibited from owning more than 10 native fresh-water turtles without a valid commercial turtle permit. A permit holder may capture, possess and transport more than 10 native fresh-water turtles AS LONG AS the turtles are not held for more than 72-hours. NOTE: This does not apply to any person with a valid pet dealer license or valid food sales establishment licensed.

A person may apply for a permit with the department at any time. The permit year is April 1 to March 31. The fee for a commercial turtle permit is:

- \$50 for Georgia residents: and
- \$500 for non-Georgia residents.

The department will issue permits, at no charge, to anyone operating as an established turtle farm prior to January 25, 2012. **NOTE:** Before a permit is issued department personnel will inspect facilities to make sure they are in compliance with this rulemaking.

Recordkeeping and Reports

All permit holders must maintain written records on each transaction of a commercial enterprise involving native fresh-water turtles. The records, which must be made available to the department upon request, must include the following:

- Source;
- Species;
- Age class (hatchling, juvenile or adult); and
- Sex.

Permit holders will also be responsible for submitting an annual report to the department, no later than March 1 of each year, providing the following:

- Total number of turtles of each species possessed, including number of each sex;
- Total number of turtles of each species captures, including number of each sex;
- Counties trapped;
- Total mortality, by species and including cause of death;
- Number of turtles, by species, harvested for market;
- Number of each species of turtles or eggs sold, offered for adoption, given away, bartered or exchanged; and
- Per transaction, the name and address of each supplier of native fresh-water turtles or eggs and the name and address of each purchaser or recipient of native fresh-water turtles, turtle eggs or turtle products.

Limits

The rulemaking also provides a list of species that may NOT be taken by permit holders in greater number than the respective limit on an annual basis. Please refer to the [text of the rulemaking](#) for that list. However, the proposal also states that the department may issue a “catch out” authorization for private ponds that allow a person possessing a valid commercial turtle permit to remove native fresh-water turtles and not be subject to these limits.

Turtle Farms

Turtle farms are given a list of standards for outdoor facilities, such as breeding ponds, grow-out ponds and hold ponds, in this proposal. Department personnel are also granted the power to inspect turtle farms, at any time. The department may inspect turtles, eggs, records, lands, facilities, equipment and may include a complete census or scientific survey of the turtle stock.

Recommended Action:

A public hearing was held on this rulemaking earlier this month and the public written comment deadline has lapsed. However, the Board of Natural Resources will hold a meeting to consider the proposed rules and comments received on Wednesday, January 25, 2012 at 9:00 a.m. at 2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, SE, Suite 1252, Atlanta, Georgia. The public may attend this meeting and make comments. Information on how to contact the Department can also be found in the [text of the rulemaking](#).

PIJAC is monitoring this issue and will present any updates via the [“Breaking News” page](#) on the PIJAC website. If you have any further questions, please contact PIJAC’s Bambi Nicole Osborne at 202-452-1525, ext. 105 or via email at bambi@pijac.org.