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# THE NEWS-PRESS

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2025 | NEWS-PRESS.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

## Winners of bear permits not known

### With hunt underway, FWC not sharing info

Chad Gillis

Fort Myers News-Press & Naples Daily News  
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Some Florida hunters say humans should put fear into animals like the Florida black bear, saying the animal is a dangerous apex predator that kills pets, destroys homes and raids refrigerators.

Captain Phil Walter at Gator Guides said the hunt is part of the way the world works, and that people should be able to manage their lands and the wildlife on it the way they see fit.

"In the natural order of things, a predator really needs to fear humans to coexist with us," Walter said. "With no hunts, this apex predator has no fear of humans."

Florida's controversial bear hunt started Dec. 6 and will end Dec. 28. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conser-

vation Commission is overseeing the hunt, and the state granted 172 lottery style permits for Florida black bears.

The state is refusing to release information about the ongoing Florida black bear hunt to the USA Today Network.

USA TODAY made requests in November and again this week for the names of all hunters who won a lottery permit, but the agency has so far failed to meet that request.

The controversial hunt was the idea of FWC chair Rodney Barreto, who

proposed the hunt to the staff in December of 2024.

That's not how hunts are typically approved by government agencies.

Most recommendations for hunts and wildlife management come from a staff level, where the state's experts have evaluated a situation and are looking for a remedy.

Barreto told the FWC to move forward with hunt options last year, and he then

See HUNT, Page 6A

## Nurse at 80: 'I've never thought about retiring'



Carolyn Paget, a full-time registered nurse at NCH Baker Hospital, celebrates her 80th birthday during a surprise party for her. She turns 80 Dec. 15. LIZ FREEMAN/FORT MYERS NEWS-PRESS & NAPLES DAILY NEWS

### NCH Baker Hospital throws surprise birthday party

Liz Freeman Fort Myers News-Press & Naples Daily News | USA TODAY NETWORK

Carolyn Paget never imagined NCH Baker Hospital would throw her a birthday party for turning 80. • Or that she would still be logging at least 8,000 steps during a 12-hour shift as a registered nurse in the oncology unit where she has worked for more than two decades. • But her colleagues did throw a birthday party ahead of the big day Dec. 15 for the beloved full-time registered nurse, who goes by the nickname C.P. See NURSE, Page 6A

## 1 killed in chain reaction wreck

### Alligator Alley closed for hours in Collier County

Stacey Henson, Cindy McCurry-Ross and Chad Gillis

Fort Myers News-Press & Naples Daily News  
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

A deadly, multi-vehicle wreck on Interstate 75 in Collier County closed several miles of southbound lanes on Friday morning, Dec. 12.

Florida Highway Patrol reported that all lanes reopened by 9:30 a.m.

Around 2 a.m., the Florida Highway Patrol reported it had troopers on the scene of the crash at mile marker 96.

"There are multiple vehicles involved in the crash, with one fatality," the news release said. "The

See WRECK, Page 6A

### HOLIDAY DISPLAYS

It's the season for holiday lights! Get out with the family and take a tour of holiday displays and lights this weekend. Use our map as a guide: [news-press.com/holidaylightsmap](https://news-press.com/holidaylightsmap). Coming Sunday: Read about four of the best must-see light displays in Southwest Florida.

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