



FLForestry News

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE FLORIDA FOREST SERVICE

The **Florida Forest Service** is a division of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and consists of more than 1,250 dedicated employees who manage more than 1 million acres of public forestland while protecting 26 million acres of homes, forestland and natural resources from the devastating effects of wildfire.

In addition to managing more than 1 million acres of state forests for multiple public uses including timber, recreation and wildlife habitat, the Florida Forest Service also provides services to landowners throughout the state, including technical information and grant program administration.

The Florida Forest Service's forestry programs are implemented by its field operations staff within 15 field units across the state. Field personnel and equipment provide a more responsive and comprehensive approach to land management and wildfire control statewide.



Picayune Strand State Forest

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Message from the Director



Jim Karels, State Forester

Spring is here and, as always, we begin to shift our focus more and more toward wildfire response in Florida. Spring is the most active fire time during Florida's year-round wildfire season when dry, windy weather makes even the smallest spark potentially hazardous.

On average, Florida Forest Service wildland firefighters respond to more than 3,000 wildfires that burn more than 128,000 acres each year. Of these, 75 percent were human-caused and could have been prevented.

Because wildfires can often start and spread quickly in Florida, preparedness and prevention is vital. The Florida Forest Service remains steadfast in its efforts to help prepare and protect citizens, homes and natural resources from the devastating effects of wildfire.

The Florida Forest Service regularly conducts wildfire mitigation projects throughout Florida that help reduce wildfire risk around homes by removing or

reducing flammable vegetation that could serve as fuel for wildfire. We also work diligently within local Florida communities to provide wildfire safety and prevention outreach and education for all ages.

I encourage citizens to help the Florida Forest Service keep wildfires at bay by always being careful with outdoor fires. Some ways to help prevent wildfires include:

- Check with your local city or county officials to see if there are any burn restrictions in the area.
- Obey Florida's outdoor burning laws and obtain an authorization from the Florida Forest Service for burn piles greater than 8 feet in diameter.
- Never leave a fire unattended and make sure it is completely out before leaving.
- Keep a shovel and water hose handy in case the fire starts to escape containment.
- Report suspicious wildfire activity to local law enforcement by calling the state's Arson Alert Hotline at (800) 342-5869.

For more information about wildfire prevention and mitigation in Florida, contact a Wildfire Mitigation Specialist or visit www.FloridaForestService.com.



Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Adam H. Putnam, Commissioner



Why Longleaf Pine Matters

Longleaf pine ecosystems are among the most diverse in North America, supporting a large array of herbs and grasses, as well as rare animal species such as red-cockaded woodpeckers and gopher tortoises. The natural range of longleaf pine includes most of the Atlantic and Gulf Coastal Plains from southeastern Virginia to eastern Texas and south through the northern two-thirds of peninsular Florida. The species also grows in the Piedmont, Ridge and Valley, and Mountain Provinces of Alabama and northwest Georgia.

According to Landscape America, “the longleaf pine ecosystem supports high plant diversity. More than 40 species have been documented in a single square meter, and as many as 170 species in 1,000 square meters, or ¼ acre. This level of diversity is very high for ecosystems in the temperate United States, and is among the most diverse in North America.”

Much of the remaining acreage exists as fragmented stands in varying degrees of isolation. Recently, however, many organizations and agencies have taken steps to prevent further loss, improve what’s left, and restore the longleaf pine ecosystem where possible. Florida’s Longleaf Pine Ecosystem Geodatabase contributes to this effort by providing detailed, baseline data on the location and current ecological condition of remaining longleaf sites in Florida.



native range of longleaf pine.

Florida Forest Service Unveils New Statewide Longleaf Pine Ecosystem Geodatabase

Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Adam H. Putnam and the Florida Forest Service recently unveiled a new statewide Longleaf Pine Ecosystem Geodatabase. The Florida Forest Service partnered with Florida State University’s Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) to map 2.2 million acres of longleaf pine ecosystems in Florida.

“This project has yielded the best and most extensive knowledge on longleaf pine ecosystem conditions in the country,” said Commissioner of Agriculture Adam H. Putnam. “We are proud that half of all known longleaf pine ecosystems in the United States occur in Florida.”

The longleaf pine ecosystem is particularly important in terms of ecological and economic values and is home to one of the most diverse mixes of plant and animal species, including many that are rare or protected. It also provides resources for many wood-fiber, lumber and other forest products that are important to everyday life.

The original longleaf pine ecosystem once covered more than 90 million acres across the southeastern United States. By the mid 1900s, however, this valuable ecosystem was depleted to less than 4 percent of its original area. To keep longleaf pine and other forest ecosystems healthy and productive, Florida’s forest industry and forest owners apply sustainable forestry practices to enhance and protect wildlife and water resources.

“Preservation efforts require cooperation between public and private partners to accomplish soil and water conservation, wildlife habitat enhancement

and timber product supply,” said State Forester Jim Karels. “With this data, we are able to accurately locate and guide the management of valuable longleaf pine ecosystems in Florida.”

In addition to the longleaf pine ecosystem mapping data, 1.7 million of those mapped acres also contain information on the longleaf ecological condition. The Longleaf Pine Ecosystem Geodatabase project is supported through a grant from the U.S. Forest Service. To view the findings from this project, visit www.FreshFromFlorida.com/LongleafGeodatabase.





Emerald Ash Borer

New Forest Pests and Diseases

Florida has more than its share of native forest pests and diseases. Although they can cause problems for people who manage forests and shade trees, these organisms are also an important part of any healthy forest system and, in the long term, they exist in a dynamic balance with the population of host trees. In contrast, exotic, non-native insects and pathogens can often wreak havoc on native trees, rapidly eliminating entire species from the landscape.

One example, laurel wilt disease (caused by the Redbay ambrosia beetle and its fungal associate), has been spreading through Florida since 2005. In addition to killing native forest species such as Redbay and sassafras, laurel wilt disease is now killing avocado trees. This is threatening a South Florida industry worth an estimated \$30 million annually. The emerald ash borer (EAB) is another exotic tree-killing insect that has been exterminating most native ash trees as its range expands through the United States and Canada. EAB has recently been found killing trees in Louisiana and Georgia, putting Florida's forest pest and survey specialists on high alert.

When exotic pests and pathogens become well-established, they are often nearly impossible to eradicate. To combat this, the Florida Forest Service's Forest Health Section collaborates with partners from the Division of Plant Industry's Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS) program to detect newly-arrived exotic species.

In addition to an ongoing EAB trapping survey, Florida participates in a national Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) trapping program, to detect the presence of non-native bark and wood-boring beetles that may have been unintentionally

introduced via the state's many ports of entry. The aim of this program is to increase the likelihood of early detection of new problem species. Early detection, however, may not be enough if little is known about the newly arrived species (including its hosts and whether it is likely to infest living trees).

A research team from the University of Florida School of Forest Resources and Conservation, led by Dr. Jiri Hulcr, is taking a more proactive, "pre-invasion" approach by traveling to Asia to collect bark and ambrosia beetles that feed on pines and oaks in that region. This team conducts experiments to see if the fungi carried by those insects could act as tree-killing pathogens in North American tree species. If any are found that could act as an oak or pine-killing version of laurel wilt disease, forest health professionals will be able to better prepare for the potential arrival of that species.

Every Florida citizen and visitor can help to detect and prevent the spread of exotic tree-killing pests and diseases. Humans transporting firewood and other unprocessed wood is the main way that these invaders are able to quickly travel over great distances. To protect our forests, it is important to "buy it where you burn it," and avoid carrying untreated wood while traveling. If you observe unusual and unexplained tree mortality, report it to the local Florida Forest Service county forester or UF/IFAS Extension office. For more information, visit www.FloridaForestService.com or www.DontMoveFirewood.org.

Your Florida Forest Health Team

The Florida Forest Service forest health unit has statewide responsibility for forest pest surveys, evaluations, and impact assessments. In addition, the forest health staff provides technical training and technical assistance to county and municipal governments, forest industry representatives and the general public.

Forest health staff are also involved in the writing/production of technical and informational literature to provide timely information to Florida's citizens and forestry community. Florida Forest Service Forest Health program activities are cost-shared with the US Forest Service, through its Cooperative Forest Health Protection and Forest Health Monitoring Programs.

Forest Health Contact Information

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Florida Agricultural Landowners: Apply Now for Rural and Family Lands Protection Program

The Florida Forest Service is urging Florida's agricultural land owners to apply to participate in the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program. The goal of the program is to ensure lands will be preserved for agricultural use while providing for the protection of natural resources through perpetual agricultural conservation easements. The program will receive easement applications through May 30, 2015.

Differing from well-known Florida acquisition programs, such as Florida Forever, this agricultural easement program recognizes that a thriving rural economy with a strong agricultural base and viable rural communities is essential to Florida's future. Easements of this type work together with agricultural production to ensure sustainable agricultural practices and reasonable protection of Florida's natural resources.

In recent years, the program was appropriated more than \$16 million for the acquisition of

perpetual agriculture conservation easements. Since its inception, the program has acquired perpetual easements on multiple Florida ranches and farms to protect rural and working agricultural lands threatened by conversion to other uses such as residential and commercial development. Below are some of the goals of the program:

- Protect valuable agricultural lands.
- Create conservation easements that ensure sustainable agricultural practices.
- Prevent conversion to non-agricultural land uses in the rural base of Florida.
- Help protect natural resources in conjunction with these agricultural operations.

For information on the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program visit: www.FreshFromFlorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Florida-Forest-Service/For-Landowners/Programs/Rural-and-Family-Lands-Protection-Program.

Florida's Forest Owners Pledge to Protect Endangered Wildlife on 1.1 Million Acres

The Florida Forest Service is recognizing Florida's forest owners for their commitment to the protection of Florida's wildlife. Through a new voluntary program, Florida's forest owners have pledged to protect endangered wildlife on more than 1.1 million acres.

Florida's Wildlife Best Management Practices were developed by the Florida Forest Service and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to help protect wildlife species in Florida. Forest owners who volunteer to participate are helping to protect 16 imperiled species identified as potentially vulnerable to

forestry operations. These include several aquatic species, upland burrowing animals and nesting birds such as the Bluenose Shiner, the Gopher Tortoise and the Southeastern American Kestrel. The Florida Forest Service and FWC are working cooperatively to provide educational opportunities for forest owners and forestry practitioners. For more information or to enroll a forest in this voluntary program, visit http://freshfromflorida.s3.amazonaws.com/Media%2FFiles%2FFlorida-Forest-Service-Files%2FFlorida_Forestry_Wildlife_Best_Management_Practices_For_State_Imperiled_Species_Manual.pdf

Your Forest Managed

Did you know there is a statewide network of foresters available to help private landowners manage forest land of any size? Foresters can prepare management plans, provide information on forestry grants and more. No matter what the goals may be for your timbered land, your Florida Forest Service County Forester is there to provide you the best management keys to success.

County Foresters have a long and proud heritage of providing sound counsel to Florida's private forest landowners for nearly 100 years. As Florida has grown and changed, so too has the role of County Foresters. Today, Foresters provide a myriad of services to private landowners across the state with an emphasis on assisting with the implementation of sustainable forestry principles.

Planning and Management

- Developing forest management plans
- Assisting with Best Management Practices
- Tree identification
- Education workshops
- Assistance with disease and pest problems
- Area burning regulations
- Prescribed fire management plans
- Provide information regarding city and county ordinances
- Recommendations regarding pruning, tree removal and fertilization

Providing resources

- Urban forestry consultant list
- Tree removal business list
- Landscape business list
- Information on federal cost-share programs
- Tree Planting contractor list
- Timber buyer lists
- Provide forest consultant list
- Master logger list

Contact your **county forester today** to learn about how the Florida Forest Service can help you reach your land management goals.



Federal Excess Equipment Saves Lives During North Florida Flood

“I don’t know what we would have done...
It was a very close call”

- John Browning
Concord Fire Chief

The Havana and Concord Volunteer Fire Departments in Gadsden County had only just begun leasing two new federal excess trucks from the Florida Forest Service when the two pieces of equipment were called to action, rescuing seven people from a flood in late December.

Just 16 days after receiving them, firefighters were prepping the two federal excess 2.5 ton cab-over cargo trucks for new paint jobs. However, a critical midnight call put the cosmetic transformation on hold. Heavy rainfall had caused the Ochlockonee River to flood, closing Fairbanks Ferry Road. The two volunteer fire departments responded quickly with both of the federal excess trucks and found that two individuals were stranded on the hood of a car. The firefighters noticed that the car was leaning precariously against a guard rail so they acted swiftly, navigating one of the trucks through the high water to rescue the two people. They were able to drive close enough to pull them to safety on the back of the truck’s cargo bed.

Six hours later, firefighters received a call that another car had driven past the barricades at Fairbanks Ferry, completely washing the vehicle off the road. This time, there were five people stranded and in danger. The group stood atop the only portion of the car that was above flood waters: the roof. With no time to spare, firefighters used the other federal excess truck to maneuver close enough to facilitate rescue. The firefighters then used ropes to bring the group to safety.

“I don’t know what we would have done if we hadn’t had those [federal excess] trucks,” said Concord Fire Chief John Browning. “It was a very close call.”

The Florida Forest Service recently began leasing the new cargo trucks to rural fire departments after acquiring them through the Firefighter Federal Excess Program (FFP). For decades, the Florida Forest Service has helped rural fire departments obtain no-cost lease equipment through this program.

“These trucks were chosen for their ability to enhance the capabilities of our rural fire departments” said State Forester Jim Karels. “The Firefighter Federal Excess Program has been the backbone for rural and volunteer fire departments across the state.”

For more information about the Florida Forest Service’s Firefighter Federal Excess Program, contact Matt Weinell, Fire Resource Manager, at (850) 681-5931 or Matt.Weinell@FreshFromFlorida.com



Host a Community Event at a Florida State Forest

The Florida Forest Service Offers a Variety of Facilities and Outdoor Areas to Host Community-based Events throughout Florida

The Florida Forest Service offers an array of recreational opportunities throughout its 37 Florida State Forests. Citizens can enjoy a wide variety of outdoor activities by foot, horse, bicycle and more. Beyond outdoor recreation, local communities can benefit from Florida state forests in other ways. Throughout Florida, countless clubs and organizations are often on the hunt for a perfect venue for a community event or fundraiser. Many clubs and organizations around the state have already found that perfect spot in their local Florida state forest. The Florida Forest Service offers a variety of facilities and outdoor areas to host community-based events and welcomes the opportunity to form new partnerships with local clubs and organizations.

One example of a successful partnership is the Angry Tortoise 25K/50K trail race at Cary State Forest. The Angry Tortoise race was created by the Florida Striders Track Club, a non-profit organization made up of running enthusiasts from the Jacksonville area. The mission of the Florida Striders Track Club is “to promote and encourage running by educating the

community on the benefits of physical fitness and sports”. The club holds a variety of runs and races each year to help the local community and support their mission.



When the club reached out to the Florida Forest Service, the staff worked closely with representatives from Florida Striders to develop an event that accomplished their club goals while protecting and promoting the beauty and importance of Cary State Forest. After several planning sessions, which included completing the required State Forest Use Permit, the Angry Tortoise 25K/50K was born.

The Angry Tortoise 25K/50K has proven to be extremely successful for both the Striders Club and the state forest. This

year’s race event raised funds for the Florida Striders Track Club children’s running program. After the event, extra shirts and food were donated to JASMYN of Jacksonville, another local program that supports youth in need. In total, the event raised almost \$2,000 in contributions for the local community. In addition, Friends of Florida State Forests, a non-profit direct service organization of the Florida Forest Service, used the event as a fundraising opportunity for the Florida state forests. Thanks to local donations, more than \$350 was raised to benefit state forests in Florida.

Citizens or organizations interested in partnering with the Florida Forest Service should contact their local state forest office. All group activities require a State Forest Use Permit and fees will vary by activity and services required. For more information on Florida state forests, please visit www.FloridaForestService.com.



Quarterly Winner: "Moonrise over Picayune" by Susan Stocker at Picayune Strand State Forest.

Florida State Forest Photo Contest Quarterly Winners



Creative Category: "Poster Sunrise" by Susan Stocker
Picayune Strand State Forest.



Nature Category: "Catch of the Day" by Richard Higgins
Lake Talquin State Forest.



Recreation Category: "River View" by Valerie McDeavitt
Withlacoochee State Forest



Employee Category: "Night Prescribed Burn" by Elizabeth Smith
Jennings State Forest

Minnesota Nursery Gives Back to Forests Across U.S.



Minnesota Nursery Plants Trees in Florida to Reach Goal of Planting 1 Million Trees across United States

FRIENDS OF FLORIDA State Forests
www.FloridaStateForests.org

A True Friend of Florida State Forests!

2010: Okaloachoochee Slough State Forest	44,444 Slash Pines
2011: John M. Bethea State Forest	42,800 Slash Pines
2012: Goethe State Forest	58,050 Slash Pines
2013: Tiger Bay and Seminole State Forest	61,000 Slash Pines
2014: Newnans Lake State Forest	36,990 Longleaf Pines
2015: Lake George State Forest (projected)	14,500 Slash Pines, 35,500 Longleaf Pines

In 2007, Chris Mickman and his brother were thinking about how they could give back to the nation's forests that have been so good to them since they started making and selling Christmas wreaths decades ago. As they harvest the Balsam Fir raw materials from Minnesota trees, it has always been important to them to do so in a sustainable manner. The Mickman brothers took this passion for sustainable forest management a big step further when they set off on their mission to help plant new trees and forests across the entire country.

They soon established a "lofty goal" (in his words) to plant 1 million trees across all 50 states. As of spring 2015, they are more than half way through reaching their goal. So far, they have made donations to 38 states of approximately 550,000 trees. In 2010 Mickman Brothers contacted the Florida Forest Service's Friends of Florida State Forests program to find out how they could help donate large quantities

of affordably-priced seedlings to be planted annually. Chris visited Seminole State Forest in March (pictured above) where he joined Ralph Risch, Florida Forest Service biological scientist to view an area where their slash pine donation is making a difference. Chris looks forward to visiting more of Florida's state forests with future generations of Mickmans to instill an appreciation of forests, foresters and what they do for our planet. To date, Mickman Brothers has contributed to the reforestation of more than 330,000 trees (Slash/Longleaf Pines) in seven Florida state forests since 2010. If you or your organization would like to join these efforts please contact Doug.Ott@FreshFromFlorida.com or visit www.FloridaStateForests.org.

About Mickman Brothers: "The Mickman Family has been making wreaths since 1934 when their Norwegian Grandmother made a wreath for her front door and her son sold it to get enough money to buy her a Christmas present. Her son and the

current generation of Mickmans have been making wreaths and supplying wreaths to scout and other non-profit organizations so they can raise enough money for camping trips and other expenses. In addition to making wreaths, they provide landscape and irrigation construction, tree care, and have a garden center in a northern suburb of Minneapolis Minnesota."

