



FLForestry News

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE FLORIDA FOREST SERVICE



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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.

Message from the Director:



Jim Karels, State Forester

The Florida Forest Service is proud to present the first issue of FLForestry News, a resource for the public to find helpful information about forestry and wildfire issues in Florida. The

Florida Forest Service has many resources available to the public for education, safety, forest and land management, recreation and more. This newsletter will put new and useful information in the hands of the public each quarter.

The Florida Forest Service has been working hard to become the best organization it can be for Florida's citizens. This summer, we were once again fortunate with favorable weather conditions that kept wildfires at bay and gave the Florida Forest Service continued opportunity for growth.

Favorable conditions in the Southeast allowed us to lend wildfire suppression support to Western

states while continuing to provide for the safety of Florida's citizens. This year, the Florida Forest Service deployed 256 individuals to assist wildfire suppression efforts in the Western United States. The experiences that our firefighters gain out West will build upon their first-class training and experience fighting wildfires here in Florida.

Summer rains have also set Florida up for what should be another outstanding prescribed burn season for state forest lands and private lands alike. We are committed to continue using this excellent land management tool to its greatest potential.

We look forward to sharing updates and useful information with you each quarter. Please feel free to visit our website at **FloridaForestService.com** or contact a local field unit office for more information about the many excellent programs we have available to the public.



Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Adam H. Putnam, Commissioner

Prescribed Fire Helps Grow Bobwhite Quail Population

The Florida Forest Service has teamed up with Florida's primary land management agencies to enhance, promote and conserve quality habitat for northern bobwhite quail and other upland birds and animals on more than 11,000 acres of the Blackwater River State Forest. This venture is part of the Upland Ecosystem Restoration Project (UERP), a multi-agency cooperative effort to increase populations of northern bobwhite quail and other declining fire-dependent wildlife species on public lands throughout Florida.

Like many animal and plant species in Florida, northern bobwhite quail rely on frequent, low-grade fires for population and habitat preservation. Prescribed fire is one of the most cost-effective and efficient tools available for managing quail habitat. Prescribed fires benefit bobwhite quail habitat by enhancing nest cover and brood range, improving insect and seed foraging conditions, helping control hardwood invasion into the forest midstory, and decreasing the probability of destructive wildfire.

Resource managers have used a combination of prescribed fire, timber harvests and hardwood reduction to improve habitat conditions and encourage bobwhite population growth on the Blackwater River State Forest. Bobwhite coveys, or small flocks, have been counted

(Continued on pg. 10)



Banner Year for Prescribed Fire in Florida

More than 2.5 Million Acres Across Florida Underwent Prescribed Burns Last Year

By Chelsea Ealum,
Communications & PR Coordinator

The Florida Forest Service oversees one of the most active prescribed fire programs in the country. Prescribed fire is used to reduce the risk of wildfires and keep Florida's natural habitats healthy and growing.

During the past year, the Florida Forest Service reports that more than 2.5 million acres across Florida were treated with prescribed fire, one of the highest numbers ever reported by any state in the country. More than 214,000 of these acres were on state forest land.

"Prescribed fire in Florida is a very important land management tool," said State Forester Jim Karels. "It is a safe way to apply a natural process, ensure ecosystem health, and reduce wildfire risk for people, homes and natural resources."

Prescribed fire is used to reduce the buildup of flammable plant materials that fuel and intensify dangerous wildfires. Reducing hazardous buildup results in increased safety for surrounding

areas. Other benefits from prescribed fires include:

- Disease control in young pines.
- Habitat improvement for wildlife.
- Range management.
- Preservation of endangered plant and animal species.

The Florida Forest Service regularly manages its more than 1 million acres of state forest lands with prescribed fire while also conducting or authorizing prescribed burns on other public and private lands.

"Last year, we were fortunate to experience many days with conditions favorable for prescribed fire," Karels said. "Conditions can change quickly and drastically in Florida, so it is our responsibility to take advantage of favorable conditions whenever they are present."

Florida's prescribed burning program is extremely active due,

in part, to its unique Certified Prescribed Burn Manager program. This program trains and certifies individuals as Certified Prescribed Burn Managers. Certified Prescribed Burn managers receive certain benefits such as liability protection under Florida Statutes 590.125, extra time to burn and the ability to submit online open burn requests. Anyone who uses prescribed fire or con-

ducts controlled burns on a regular basis should consider enrolling in this useful and educational program. (See "How to Become a Certified Burn Manager" on pg 3)

Prescribed fire is a safe way to apply a natural process, ensure ecosystem health and reduce wildfire risk.

To learn more about the Florida Forest Service's prescribed fire programs, visit our Prescribed Fire web page at <http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Florida-Forest-Service/Wildfire/Prescribed-Fire>.



New Changes to Open Burning Laws & Rules

By Jim Brenner, Fire Management Administrator

There have been several significant changes to the open burning laws and rules over the past two years. These changes were brought about when the Florida Forest Service and the Florida Attorney General reviewed the existing regulations and found that the language needed to be updated. The following is a review of the most significant changes made to the statutes that affect open burning in Florida:

1. F.S. 570.07(9)28 was amended to include pile burning as it is defined in **F.S. 590.125(1)**. Prior to this, certain types of land clearing burns were the legislative responsibility of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The change gave responsibility to the Florida Forest Service.

2. In 1978, the Florida Legislature transferred the responsibility for all Agricultural and Silvicultural Open Burning to the Florida Forest Service (then Division of

Forestry). **F.S. 590** has always given the Florida Forest Service the authority to write rules to manage the prevention, detection and suppression of wildfires. However, the statute change in 2013 specifies that the Florida Forest Service would authorize open burning for Agriculture, Silviculture and Land Clearing in Florida.

3. F.S. 590.02(3) was amended to make it clear that sovereign immunity applies to all planning activities used by the Florida Forest Service when monitoring, or suppressing an outdoor fire (whether wildfire or prescribed fire).

4. 590.02(10) authorizes the Florida Forest Service to delegate its authority pertaining to the open burning of land clearing debris (or the authority delegated to the Florida Forest Service from the Department of Environmental Protection) to manage and enforce regulations pertaining to the burning of yard

waste. The authority to delegate to any municipality (city or county) was part of the 2013 revision.

5. 590.125: A definition was added to the law for Gross Negligence, meaning conduct so reckless or wanting in care that it constitutes a conscious disregard or indifference to life, safety or rights of persons exposed to such conduct.

6. 590.125: A definition for *smoldering* was added, meaning the “continued consumption of fuels, which may emit flames and smoke, after a fire is contained”.

7. 590.125(2): In the non-certified section, the person named responsible or a designee must be present at the burn site until the burn is completed.

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How to Become a Certified Burn Manager

The first step toward becoming a Certified Prescribed Burn Manager is to take the Florida Certified Prescribed Burn Manager Training Course. This course is offered in two formats: distance learning and classroom.

The distance learning format is a web-based self study course intended for experienced burners who wish to polish their skills and receive certification from the Florida Forest Service. The classroom format is a three-day course open to individuals of all experience levels. Classroom courses will be offered at various times and locations across the state.

All students must either have or obtain direct (not standby) experience conducting at least three acreage burns before receiving initial certification.

For landowners that frequently burn piles, the Florida Forest Service also offers a Certified Pile Burner program.

Further information and application forms can be found at **FloridaForestService.com** or by contacting the Florida Forest Service Withlacoochee Training Center at (352) 797-4172.



New Online Wildfire Risk Assessment Tool

By Chelsea Ealum, Communications and PR Coordinator

Recently, the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal (SouthWRAP) was unveiled. SouthWRAP is an interactive tool designed to provide user-friendly public access to detailed wildfire risk information for cities, communities and homes. The program was developed by the Florida Forest Service and the Southern Group of State Foresters, and is the first of its kind in the nation.

SouthWRAP allows citizens, community leaders, fire professionals and decision-makers to work hand-in-hand to reduce wildfire risk. The Florida Forest Service encourages all Floridians to visit the website, learn about

their risk and take action to protect their families and homes from the threat of wildfire.

SouthWRAP allows users to pinpoint a specific location and identify wildfire threats based on landscape characteristics, historical fire occurrence, weather conditions and terrain. The site also routes users to resources that can help them tackle identified threats and reduce wildfire risk.

“This is an easy-to-use tool that puts sophisticated mapping and fire risk analysis technology at the fingertips of our citizens,” said Jim Karels, State Forester. “SouthWRAP is as simple to use

as any common online mapping service, with most users becoming proficient within minutes.”

There are currently two versions of the SouthWRAP tool, the Public Viewer and the Professional Viewer. The Public Viewer is available to the general public and an account sign-in is not required. The Professional Viewer, which requires a username and password, is designed to support the community wildfire protection planning needs of government officials, hazard mitigation planners and wildfire professionals. Both versions of the program are available at SouthernWildfireRisk.com.

Are You FIREWISE?

Find out what the experts know about the best way to make your home and neighborhood safer from wildfire. From the basics of defensible space and sound landscaping techniques, to research on how homes ignite (and what you can do about it), there are tips, tools and teachings you can use at

Firewise.org.

Smokey Bear Turns 70!

Smokey Bear celebrated 70 years of wildfire prevention on August 9th, 2014. The Smokey Bear campaign is the longest running in Ad Council history. Despite the continued success of the Smokey Bear campaign, wildfire prevention remains one of the most critical issues affecting our country. Smokey's message is as relevant today as it was in 1944. Although people tend to associate wildfire issues with the summer season and the Western states, wildfires can occur on any day of the year in Florida. In Florida, most wildfires are caused by human carelessness with escaped debris burning and arson being the top two causes. Although Smokey has been essential to the reduction of wildfires in the last seven decades, he still needs your help reducing wildfires. For more information about Smokey Bear and wildfire prevention, visit SmokeyBear.com.

This Month's Q&A Wildfire Tips

Q: What can I do to increase wildfire safety around my home?

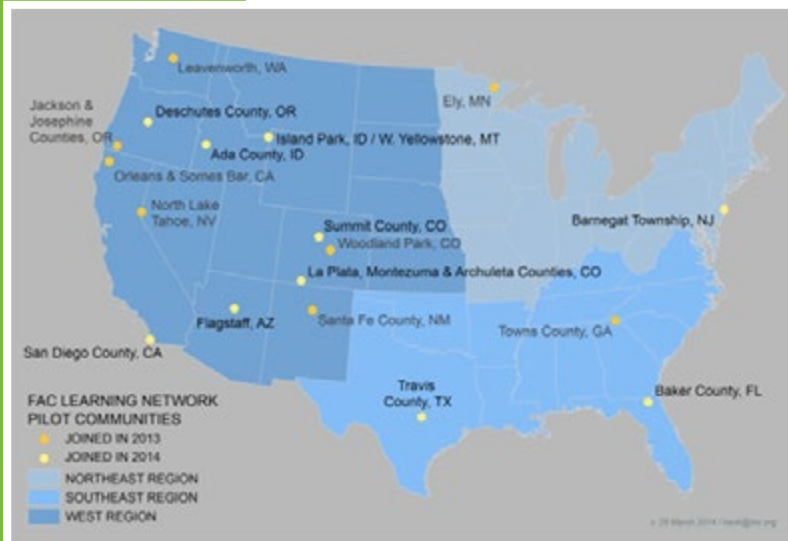
A: Wildfire is a naturally occurring event that often arrives unannounced and moves quickly. Would your home survive? In a single afternoon, you can improve your home's aesthetics and increase the chances it will survive the impact of a wildfire. Some actions you can take include: Removing leaves, pine needles and dry fuels away from the foundation of your home and yard. Some actions you can take include:

- Cleaning all debris from your roof and gutters.
- Keeping lawn trimmed and watered (according to local water regulations).
- Pruning low hanging tree branches 6-10 feet from the ground.
- Removing highly flammable plant materials within 30 feet of the home.
- Make sure soffit vents, eaves, attic and crawl spaces have metal screens.
- Clearly mark your residence so emergency personnel can find you.

Baker County Selected for Fire Adapted Communities Program

Baker County selected as one of 10 new communities in the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network Hub.

By Ronda Sutphen, Wildfire Prevention/Mitigation Coordinator



Baker County was selected as one of 10 new communities to participate in the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network hub. At this time, there are only 18 hub communities nationwide in the Fire Adapted Communities network. The Florida Forest Service in Baker County will be working with many partner agencies including the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Baker County Fire Department and other government agencies and private landowners to help Baker County become more adapted to fire. Forest Area Supervisor Larry Chestnut and Mitigation Specialist Doc Bloodworth have done an excellent job mitigating wildfires in Baker County. Their efforts have played a huge role in the selection of Baker County as a hub to Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network.

What is a Fire Adapted Community?

A Fire Adapted Community (FAC) is a community that consists of informed and prepared citizens who collaboratively plan and tak-

nity to safely accept fire as part of the surrounding landscape.

Fire Adapted Communities is not a new program but rather a process that involves pre-



ing action to safely co-exist with wildland fire.

A knowledgeable, engaged community whose actions (in relation to infrastructure, buildings, landscaping, and the surrounding ecosystem) lessen the need for extensive emergency protective actions and enables the commu-

scribed burning, fuel reduction, Community Wildfire Protection Plans, Firewise and Ready Set Go! programs, and more.

To learn more about fire adapted communities visit FireAdapted.org.

LOOK OUT ABOVE FOR HAZARDOUS TREES

How to Analyze Trees for Potential Safety Hazards

By David Conser, Senior Forester

CRASH! She was sure a car had run into her house! Rushing outside she found, not a car, but a huge tree branch, splayed across the roof. A large, dead branch had finally given into gravity thanks to all the soaking rains. Why hadn't someone seen it ahead of time and done something about it?

Hurricane season is upon us, and in addition to other preparedness efforts, homeowners should turn their attention to the condition of their trees. Many homeowners are blissfully unaware of the hazard that may be lurking above. Does this mean we should turn our yards into treeless pastures, or throw our hands up in resignation? Neither extreme is necessary or appropriate.

There are simple, tried and true principles for assessing the hazard a particular tree may present. That said, there are few guarantees regarding what this natural world may or may not throw our way. However, taking extra precautions may

help increase safety.

Sick, stressed or compromised trees often show signs that are noticeable to the discerning eye. A tree with a full, luxurious canopy of leaves is almost always more healthy than one with a thinning top. Foresters and arborists refer to the live top of a tree as its "crown." Crown decline refers to a condition when a tree has a significant number of leafless twigs scattered throughout the top of the tree. It signals that the tree is declining, often due to root injury or the steady progression of one or more root diseases. A tree with compromised roots is more likely to topple over.

The trunk and branching structure of a tree is important. One common example of poor structure leading to hazardous conditions is a "V" crotch, where two large trunks or branches join together tightly in a "V-like" configuration. This means the tree probably has a bark to bark connection internally, which is very weak. One or more of these large trunks or branches

may fail, splitting away. On the other hand, branches that grow out from the trunk in a more horizontal direction are likely strongly connected. "U" shaped crotches are also much stronger than "V" crotches. This problem is best solved with proper pruning (the earlier the better). Live oaks tend to have many "V" crotches, but is an exception to this rule of thumb and is a great tree with ultra strong wood. A Live Oak with a modest size "V" crotch may be fine, while a Live Oak with a large "V" crotch may fail. It is best to prune your live oak early to force a more horizontal branching structure, or "U" crotches. A qualified arborist or tree surgeon may be your best bet.

Trees should be surveyed for dead branches, or entirely dead trees. This, however, brings up an important consideration, in all cases, but especially with dead wood: Is there a target? In other words, what is the worst thing that can happen if this tree or branch falls?

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October is State Forest Awareness Month

By Lorna Radcliff, Recreation Specialist

Fall weather cools down the Florida heat offering outdoor enthusiasts ideal temperatures for their recreational pursuits. Grab your gear and head out to Florida's state forests for adventures that will become some of your fondest memories. From camping along the forest's waterways, to hiking meandering trails through the wilderness, there is something for everyone. Go further, explore with your bicycle, horse or kayak and discover the natural diversity and abundance of resources within the forests. Let the wildlife, wildflowers and simple sounds of the forest surround you and entice your curiosity.

Are you cautious about going alone? Don't be. Annual events offer opportunities to explore with others who will share local knowledge of our forests.

Become a part of annual events and enjoy the traditions, education and appreciation of Florida's state forests.

Visitors from all over drive to the panhandle to enjoy the Munson Community Heritage Festival each year at the Krul Recreation Area of Blackwater State Forest. It is abundant with booths that offer current and historical activities that are educational and fun for everyone.

Equestrians pull in to north central Florida and saddle-up to participate in the Breast Cancer Awareness Ride held at Goethe State Forest. This year the Levy County Horse Club hosts their 14th annual ride with the same opportunities for the public to learn about the forests, breast cancer awareness and Florida's greenways and trails. Arrive at

lunch time to enjoy some down home BBQ .

Is your dog your best friend? Grab the leash and take him out to the east coast for the annual Greyhound Pets of America 5K and Pet Walk at the Indian Lake Recreation Area of Tiger Bay State Forest. The dog contests will keep you entertained.

For more information on these and other hosted outdoor recreational opportunities, check out the calendar of events online at FloridaForestService.com.

VOLUNTEERS Make a Difference

Thank you to all the Volunteers who contribute their time and talents to the Florida Forest Service. More than 57,000 hours of service was recorded by volunteers in the past year. It is through hard work and dedication from volunteers that our agency's programs and services are enhanced to better benefit our visitors, communities and state.



State Forest Photo Contest



"Kayaking Arbuckle Creek" by Theresa Carson on Lake Wales Ridge State Forest

October starts the 2014-2015 State Forest Photo Contest where you can submit photographs taken at a Florida State Forest for a chance to be a quarterly winner. Quarterly winners are automatically entered for Photo of the Year. The contest has categories for nature, recreation, creative and employee. Find contest rules and forms online at FloridaForestService.com under Recreation.

Become a TRAILWALKER

Florida's 35 state forests provide ample opportunities for space, solitude, self reliance and physical fitness. Floridians can participate in a wide variety of forest and trail activities including hiking, biking, paddling, horseback riding, trail running, bird watching and more.

"Participation in the Florida State Forest Trailwalker Program is another great way for Floridians to discover our state forests," said Jim Karels, State Forester. "The opportunity to have a personal experience with nature is a rare opportunity offered by this program."

The Florida State Forest Trailwalker Program provides rewards for completing various state forest trail lists. Trailwalkers that hike and log ten trails on the Trailwalker's Trail List will receive a special Trailwalker patch that can be sewn on to a favorite shirt or hiking vest, plus a certificate commemorating the achievement signed by the Commissioner of Agriculture, Adam H. Putnam. Once you have completed the first level, print out another Trailwalker's log sheet and start the next adventure.

For more information about the Trailwalker Program, visit <http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Florida-Forest-Service/Recreation>



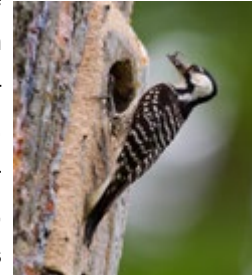
State Forest Feature: PICAYUNE STRAND

By Heather Ferrand, Wildfire Mitigation Specialist

The Sabal Palm Trail, part of the Great Florida Birding & Wildlife Trail, a hiking trail located in the Picayune Strand State Forest. Located in the Belle Mead Tract and accessed from the trailhead on the western side of the forest, the 3.5-mile Sabal Palm Trail consists of two loops that traverse pine flatwoods and cypress swamp communities. Several palm and hardwood hammocks are also accessible from the trail. In addition to hiking, users are encouraged to bike the Sabal Palm Trail. Some portions of the trail, however, may be difficult to navigate with a bicycle during the height of the dry season due to deep sands.

The Sabal Palm Trail provides users with opportunities to view many native plant and wildlife species that call Picayune Strand State Forest home. The pine flatwoods that surround the trail showcase many of the

fire-adapted species common in Southwest Florida, such as muhly grass, which displays its beautiful pink plumes in the fall, and the hardy south Florida slash pine, which provides critical habitat for one of the southernmost populations of endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers in the country. Visitors can view numerous species of airplants, including the endangered giant airplant, and epiphytic orchids located among majes-



tic cypress trees that intersect the trail. In addition to red-cockaded woodpeckers, notable animal species that visitors may see while on the trail include the Florida black bear, fox squirrel, American alligator, swallow-tailed kite, wood stork, and eastern diamondback rattlesnake. Although not commonly encountered on the trail, the Florida panther calls this forest home and visitors may observe tracks and other signs of this

endangered species.

In 2013, the Florida Forest Service implemented a series of improvements to the Sabal Palm Trail trailhead to enhance both the function and aesthetic value of the site. Notable changes include a formal parking area and circle drive, a new visitor kiosk, and the removal of dozens of snags (standing dead trees) immediately adjacent to the trail and trailhead. An event space was also created just west of the trailhead and will serve as the home for Picayune Strand's Festival in the Woods.

The Festival in the Woods is an annual event developed to celebrate and educate the public about the ecology and management of the forest. The inaugural Festival was held in January 2013 and was attended by more than 250 people.

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Friends Quarterly Message

Doug Ott, Friends Coordinator, hands Robert & Julia Grayson, the new "Friends" license tag, the first Friends member to receive one. They visited our booth hosted by the Lakeland District staff, at the Big Buck Expo in July, which was held at the Florida State Fairgrounds. They also plan to become volunteers at the Withlacoochee State Forest.

Fall has arrived, and the Friends of Florida State Forests program is in full swing. We are excited about upcoming opportunities to raise additional funds for the management of Florida's state forests. The Friends program assists Florida's 35 state forests as they expand outdoor recreation, education and reforestation.

Friends kicked off the summer with an appearance in National Geographic's May issue of "Undiscovered Florida" featuring seven Florida state forests. Undiscovered Florida is available at Welcome Centers throughout Florida or can be viewed online at <http://www.nxtbook.com/worth/undiscoveredflorida/undiscoveredflorida2014/index.php#8>

Drivers on I-10 West near Pensacola may have also noticed the newest Friends of Florida State Forests billboard. This is just one way we hope

to continue encouraging citizens and tourists to visit Florida State Forests and support the management and protection of these important natural resources.

Friends of Florida State Forests invites citizens to join us at upcoming events. Recent events have included a Fall Family Outdoors Day at Matanzas State Forest and the Munson Heritage Festival. For more upcoming events, please visit www.freshfromflorida.com/News-Events/Event-Calendar/Forestry

If you want to support Florida's State Forests, encourage others to visit, purchase an annual state forest day use pass for yourself or a friend, or take it a step further and become a Friends of Florida State Forests member. For more information, visit FloridaStateForests.org, like us on **Facebook** or contact **Doug.Ott@FreshFromFlorida.com**.

Croom Motorcycle Area Withlacoochee State Forest

In order to make the 2,600 acre Croom Motorcycle Area on the Withlacoochee State Forest (Brooksville, FL) a safer, more family friendly facility, Friends of Florida State Forests raised approximately \$6,000 toward the installation of flashing beacons, photo eye sensors, security cameras, monitors, DVD, camera surge protectors and electrical supplies.



The Friends of Florida State Forests funds were collected from Croom T-Shirt Sales, Firewood Sales and other various fundraisers. Local agencies and vendors supported the effort with monetary support and volunteer hours to complete the project.

The electric gate, security camera and well lit walkway will increase safety as visitors enjoy all the Withlacoochee State Forest has to offer. The Croom Motorcycle Area is open seven days a week and offers something for every rider in the family, including a training area and young rider area. For more information visit FloridaForestService.com

Friends Donate!



Helen Koehler, longtime Friends of Florida State Forests member and past board member, hands the keys of a new Polaris Ranger to Bobby Cahal, Forestry Supervisor at Goethe State Forest. This donation, valued at nearly \$10,000, will be used for prescribed burning and state forest management.

Other Donors- Special Thanks!

\$1,000
Daughters of the American Revolution (Patriot Pines Chapter)

\$1,550
Utilities, Inc.

\$3,050
Mickman Brothers

\$3,050
Derek Whitis

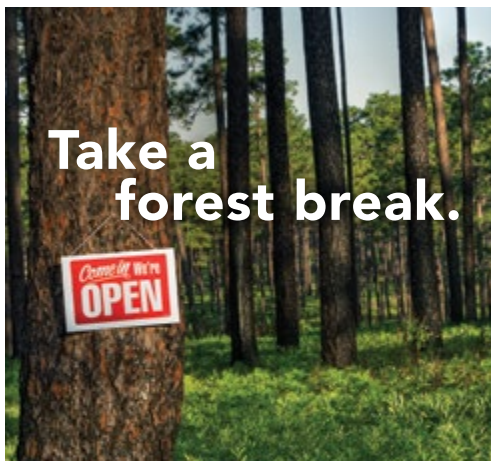
\$50,000+
Arbor Day Foundation



Prescribed Fire Helps Grow Bobwhite Quail Population *Continued from pg 2*

within the restoration area over the past six years (2008-2013). The bobwhite density count in 2013 showed the highest number of birds per acre to date.

The Florida Forest Service has more than 13,000 additional acres dedicated to the UERP project on Jennings and Withlacoochee State Forests. The UERP project is supported by the Florida Forest Service, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Department of Environmental Protection, U.S. Forest Service and Tall Timbers Research Station and Land Conservancy.



New Changes to Open Burning Laws & Rules *Continued from pg 3*

8. 590.125(3)(b)1. states that a prescribed burn can only be accomplished when a certified prescribed burn manager (CPBM) is present on site with the prescription and supervises the burn until it is completed, after which the CPBM is not required to be present.

9. 90.125(3)(b)2.a.&b., Now states that a new prescription or authorization is not required for smoldering that occurs within the authorized area unless new ignitions are conducted by the CPBM. Monitoring the smoldering activity of a certified prescribed burn also does not require a new prescription or authorization even if the fire begins to spread within the authorized burn area due to ongoing smoldering.

10. 590.125(3)(b)5.a -c was added in the 2013 revision. These three sections state that a fire spreading outside the authorized area does not constitute conclusive proof that there were inadequate fire breaks, or insufficient personnel and firefighting equipment to contain the fire. However, it

does state that if the fire remains within the authorized area during the burn, a strong rebuttable presumption exists that adequate firebreaks and sufficient personnel and firefighting equipment were present.

Changes to the Open Burning Rules as opposed to the statutes listed above are currently going through the process approval by the state and general public as well as the burning community. These changes were made to bring the rule into compliance with the 2013 changes to F.S. 590, with one exception. The exception that is not included in the statutory changes is the completion time for Certified Prescribed Burns. After the changes go into effect, the new time for completing a Certified Prescribed Burn will be two hours after sunset.

We believe that these changes will clearly define the responsibilities of the burning community in our state while at the same time protecting the public's health and safety which is an integral part of the FFS's legislative responsibility.

Picayune Strand State Forest *Continued from pg 8*

Participants enjoyed guided hikes on the Sabal Palm Trail, wildlife presentations by local area biologists, guided bicycle tours, and displays by more than 20 environmental exhibitors. The 2nd Annual Festival in the Woods will take place on Saturday, January 24, 2015 from 10 am to 3 pm.

Additional enhancements of the Sabal Palm Trail, including a self-guided interpretive tour, fitness course, spur trails, scavenger hunt for children, guided walk program, and a connector trail that will link the trail to the other 30 miles of trails in the forest, are in development and will be implemented over the next several years. The Florida Forest Service cordially invites you to visit the Sabal Palm Trail in Picayune Strand State Forest. Whether you are

a nature enthusiast, adventure seeker, weekend fitness warrior, or simply someone who enjoys a little time away from it all, the Sabal Palm Trail offers something for everyone. The trail is open from dawn until dusk, 365 days a year. A day use fee of \$2.00 applies and can be paid at the trailhead via envelopes provided. The trailhead is conveniently located 3.3 miles east of Collier Boulevard on the south side of Sabal Palm Road just east of Naples. Leashed dogs are welcome on the trail. Some portions of the trail may be under water during the wet season. Contact the Picayune Strand State Forest office for trail conditions and closures prior to your visit at (239) 348-7557.

Look out Above for Hazardous Trees

Continued from pg 6

Is it leaning away from everything? If it will not hit anything important, it is considered to have no target. Dead trees are actually vitally important to many cavity nesters, such as woodpeckers, owls, other birds, flying squirrels, and many additional critters. If one can safely leave a dead tree up, they should do so. After it finally falls, leave it if you can, since dead wood on the ground serves as valuable habitat for an assortment of animals.

There are some other, less common hazards. Does your tree have a large rotten, decayed area? You may notice one or more mushroom-like structures in decayed areas. Rotten areas of trees never heal. The tree will fight to keep the decay from progressing further. If a tree is healthy, it will probably win the fight against decay for quite some time. If the tree is unhealthy or stressed, the decay will win more quickly. Is the rotten area large enough and in a position to cause the failure of the tree or major limb? To help prevent this problem, try not to injure the bark of your trees. Bark is the tree's natural defense against decay.

Lawnmowers and weed eaters are big-time culprits in this regard. Improper pruning of branches will also exacerbate this problem.

Cankers are sunken, misshapen areas, usually on the trunk of the tree. About 30% of pine trees have cankers from a disease called fusiform rust. A canker can cause a tree to be hazardous if it extends too far around or into the trunk of the tree. If a canker extends more than half way through the tree's trunk, concern should be elevated.

A deep crack through the bark of the tree, into the wood, may indicate the tree is already failing. It is natural for bark to look like it has minute cracks all over, but a long, deep crack that appears to go all the way through is a serious warning sign.

Which trees will hold up best in hurricanes?

The latest research suggests live oak and sabal palm are the real champs. Magnolia, sand live oak, dogwood, pecan (sheltered in a non-orchard setting) and bald cypress are also quite sturdy against hurricanes. Some of the worst include laurel oak,

water oak, sand pine, Carolina laurelcherry, red maple and turkey oak. Sweetgum and red cedar have a tendency for major branches to break in hurricanes. Do not panic if, though, if these trees are present in your yard – thorough scientific surveys have shown that only 1-2% of trees that failed during hurricanes caused damage to property.

Do your trees have crown decline, "V" crotches, major dead branches, large areas of decay, cankers, or deep cracks? These are some of the main signs hazardous trees may display. Homeowners should look for these warning signs. Does the hazardous tree have a target? If so, removal or major tree work is probably warranted. A qualified arborist is a great resource for a more in-depth analysis.

Contact a Florida Forest Service **County Forester** in your area to learn more about what you can do to promote the health of your trees. Visit **FloridaForestService.com** for more information.



Take a forest break.

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