



# 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.



Tate's Hell State Forest

## This Issue

- Tree Farmer of the Year P.02
- Forest Legacy P.03
- Wildlife Best Management Practices P.04
- Timber Sales on State Forests P.05
- New State Forest in Alachua County P.06
- Trailwarrior Program P.07
- Arbor Day and Reforestation P.08
- Firewise Communities in Florida P.09
- Federal Excess Program P.10

## Message from the Director



Jim Karels, State Forester

Another year has come to a close and I truly hope that all of our readers have had the opportunity to enjoy some quality time with family and loved ones. This past year, the Florida Forest Service has achieved many accomplishments for Florida's citizens. I remain as proud as ever to be the director of this first-class forestry and firefighting agency.

Some of our accomplishments in 2014 included:

- Added two new Florida State Forests, projected to open to the public in 2015 in Alachua and DeSoto Counties.
- Administered the most active prescribed fire program in the nation.
- Saved 491 structures from being destroyed by wildfire.

- Certified 59 Firewise Communities and completed 38 county-wide Community Wildfire Protection Plans.
- Hosted 62 Operation Outdoor Freedom Events, which provided outdoor recreational opportunities for 400 of Florida's wounded veterans.
- Assisted more than 470 landowners, providing more than \$1.7 million in federal funding to help maintain healthy, productive forests on more than 100,000 acres.
- Certified 166 Florida Communities under the "Tree City USA" Designation, the fifth highest of any state in the nation.

While the above list details some of our major accomplishments, it only scratches the surface of the vast array of what we do here at the Florida Forest Service. From wildland firefighting to land management and beyond, we are committed to serving Florida and its citizens.



Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Adam H. Putnam, Commissioner



Bob & Pat Woodward, Woodward Family Farm

## 2014 Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year: Woodward Family Farm

By Roy Lima, Florida Tree Farm Committee Chair/BMP Forester

Each year, the American Tree Farm System recognizes individuals who go above and beyond in their commitment to responsible forest management. On November 14, the Florida Forest Service and the Florida Forestry Association honored the 2014 Florida Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year, the Woodward Family Farm.

The Woodward family was fortunate to grow up in the country and on the farm. As Julia Woodward Gregory explains, "Our parents taught us the value of working, helping out and taking care of the land. Daddy wanted to see us work together to keep this farm special and in the family, so he gave it to his six children in 1978." The Woodward Family Farm, better known as the Family Farm Partnership, celebrated 100 years of ownership in 2014 and is currently managed by Bob Woodward and his brother Pat, a retired pediatric physician. Michael Dooner, a profes-

sional forester and President of Southern Forestry Consultants Inc., provides natural resource management services for the Woodward family partnership.

The Woodward Family Farm consists of 1,425 acres of pine and hardwood areas with a multiple-use objective. Well managed natural stands of old growth longleaf pine, planted longleaf and loblolly pine cover the majority of the property. Picturesque hardwood drains bisect the pines, adding diversity to the landscape. Wildlife and recreation have been the primary objectives in the Woodwards' forest management plan for over 30 years.

Thinning has been conducted periodically to improve tree growth and quality, and wildlife habitat. Prescribed burning on a three-year rotation has also been important for controlling hazardous fuels and improving wildlife habitat. Herbicide application to control encroachment

of invasive species has proven effective throughout the forest property. Their commitment to long range planning is remarkable and is evident in the execution and accomplishment of management activities that take into account the future for their children and grandchildren.

The Woodward Family Farm is not only enjoyed by the family, but by many others. For years, the Woodwards have hosted field tours and invited scout troops to use the property for camping and natural resource education toward fulfillment of merit badge requirements.

Susan Woodward Walker sums up the Woodward Family Tree Farm so eloquently, "I am so thankful that we continue to own the farm and that we can manage it for timber and recreation, so that our children and grandchildren have the opportunity to enjoy it, too."

## 2014 Florida Tree Farm Inspector of the Year

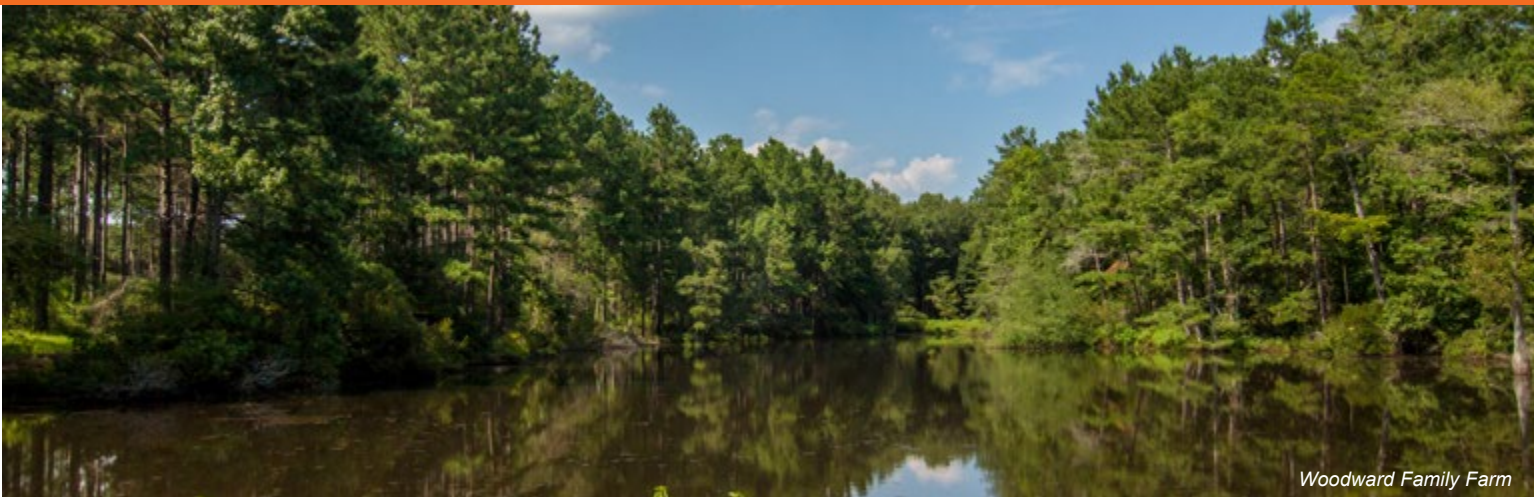


Cathy Hardin, Escambia County forester, has been selected as the 2014 Florida Tree Farm Inspector of the Year as well as the Southern Region Tree Farm Inspector of the Year for her exemplary effort educating and working with private and public forest landowners in Florida.

Hardin, who previously served as the county forester in Gadsden County, completed 12 tree farm inspections and certified three new properties as Tree Farms under the American Tree Farm System standards in 2014. One of the tree farmers she assisted while in Gadsden County – the Woodward Family Farm in Quincy – was also chosen as the Florida Tree Farmer of the Year.

Hardin will receive her Southern Region award in February at the national Tree Farm Leadership Conference in St. Louis.

For more information on the American Tree Farm program or other assistance with forest management in your area, visit <http://www.FreshFromFlorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Florida-Forest-Service/For-Landowners/County-Foresters>



Woodward Family Farm

## Florida's Forest Legacy Program

By Chelsea Ealum, Communications & Public Relations Coordinator

Florida's forestlands don't merely serve to supply timber products. They also provide wildlife habitat, watershed protection, recreational opportunities and aesthetic values. The rapid development of Florida's forest areas to non-forest uses poses an ever-increasing threat to maintaining the state's valuable forestlands. Fragmentation and parcelization across the state is contributing to the loss of these valuable ecosystems and the biological, economic and social values they provide.

Florida is one of 49 states that has implemented the Forest Legacy Program, which aims to help protect and conserve important private forests that are threatened by conversion to non-forest uses, such as development. Led by the Florida Forest Service, Forest Legacy is an important tool for preserving Florida's private forests. Forest Legacy is distinct from other conservation programs in that it will focus specifically on important forest lands and will require a Stewardship Plan or a Multi-Resource Management Plan (MRMP) for each tract accepted into the program.

A Forest Legacy Area is a geographically defined part of the state where tracts of land will be eligible for protection under Forest Legacy. Florida establishes Forest Legacy Areas by identifying areas that contain environmentally important forests, and where those forests are most threatened by conversion to non-forest uses. Environmentally important

forests may offer important geological features, mineral resources, wildlife habitats, cultural resources, recreational resources, timber management, aesthetic values or scenic values.

The main tool used for protecting these important forests is conservation easements. A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement that a property owner makes, typically with a



governmental agency, to restrict the type and amount of development that may take place on their land. Conservation easements allow designated lands to be managed by individual landowners as outlined in a Forest Stewardship Plan

or MRMP. The Florida Forest Service will provide technical assistance to the individual landowners whose land is accepted into the Forest Legacy Program.

In addition to conserving forests, landowners receive several benefits from participation in the Forest Legacy Program.

For the landowner:

- Receive payment for easement development rights without being required to give up ownership of the property.
- Protect the forest from being converted to some other use.
- Continue use of the forest and gain income from the property.
- Assure a permanent green space within the community.

For more information about the Forest Legacy Program, visit <http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Florida-Forest-Service/Our-Forests/Land-Planning-and-Administration-Section/Florida-Forest-Legacy-Program/>



# New Voluntary Florida Forestry Wildlife Best Management Practices

New Wildlife Best Management Practices were created to provide a practical approach for avoiding and minimizing loss of certain endangered species.

By Chelsea Ealum, Communications & Public Relations Coordinator

Recently, the state of Florida Adopted Rule 5I-8, Florida Forestry Wildlife Best Management Practices for State Imperiled Species (WBMPs). This cooperative effort between the Florida Forest Service and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission recognizes that silviculture (the growing and cultivation of trees) provides a valuable benefit to the conservation and management of fish and wildlife in the state. The new WBMPs were created to provide a practical approach for avoiding and minimizing the loss of certain imperiled (endangered) species. Enrollment in the program is strictly voluntary.

The Florida WBMPs were developed by a diverse group of individuals known collectively as the BMP Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). This group represented both small non-industrial forest landowners and large industrial landowners. The TAC also included forestry consultants and representatives from conservation groups, the forest industry,

the University of Florida and government agencies. The WBMPs were developed as a means to take advantage of the good stewardship provided by silvicultural operations, which coincidentally have already helped minimize impacts to state imperiled species listed by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Of the 64 imperiled species in Florida, 16 are considered potentially vulnerable to silvicultural operations.

Silvicultural operations among which imperiled species persist or thrive were identified and studied. It was determined that the majority (10) of the 16 imperiled species are aquatic and are already protected by preexisting Silviculture "Water Quality" BMPs. The new WBMPs incorporate additional protection measures for six other species of upland burrowing animals and nesting birds. These include the Gopher Tortoise, Burrowing Owl, Little Blue Heron, Tricolored Heron, Florida Sandhill Crane and Southeastern American Kestrel.

It was important for all parties involved to ensure that the new WBMPs are easy for practitioners to understand and use. State statutes dictate that Florida Wildlife BMPs will be voluntary and non-regulatory and that no other government agencies can adopt or enforce them. Landowners who voluntarily enroll in the program are not required to obtain an incidental take permit from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and are not subject to fines or penalties associated with an incidental take, should one occur as a result of their forestry operations. Conversely, Landowners who choose not to enroll in the program are subject to the laws and regulations that exist at the time of an incidental take. The Florida Forest Service and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will cooperatively monitor sites for compliance with Florida WBMPs, but only where landowners have submitted a "Notice of Intent" to follow these practices.

*(Continued on Pg 11)*



*Florida Forest Service personnel discuss timber and logging with H.B. Tuten Jr. Logging Inc.*

# Timber Sales on Florida State Forests and Other Public Lands

On average, Florida state forests generate \$5.8 million annually with an economic benefit to Florida of almost \$600 million.

By Chelsea Ealum, Communications and Public Relations Coordinator

The Florida Forest Service manages an active state forest timber sale program in an effort to promote sustainable, healthy forests in Florida. Each year, the Florida Forest Service conducts 30-40 timber sales using both lump sum and per-unit sale methods on State Forests. On average, Florida State Forests generate \$5.8 million annually with an economic benefit to Florida of almost \$600 million. This year alone, the Florida Forest Service expects to sell approximately 450,000 tons of State Forest timber, generating \$6.4 million in revenue.

The Florida Forest Service also administers a timber management assistance program for other state, county and city agencies under the Other Public Lands (OPL) program. Assistance with timber management through this program includes the preparation and administration of OPL timber sales for other public agencies. Through this program, the Florida Forest Service has helped generate \$1.75 million in total revenue per year over the last five years with OPL timber sales.

The Florida Forest Service relies on a competitive bid process to support its active

timber sale program. When bids are to be accepted for a State Forest or OPL timber sale, the Florida Forest Service will send bid packages to prospective timber buyers in the area. Additionally, all bids will be listed on the MyFloridaMarketPlace Vendor Bid System at [www.bit.ly/VendorBidSystem](http://www.bit.ly/VendorBidSystem). Each bid package will contain the following information:

- Cover letter
- Type of timber
- Number of acres
- Estimated tonnage
- Maps
- Bid sheet
- Sample contract

Timber buyers have an opportunity to review the bid package contents and timber sale site before submitting a bid by the listed due date. Bids are accepted by the Florida Forest Service through multiple methods including fax, email, hand delivery and mail-in. Once bidding has closed, the contract will be awarded to the highest bidder (Bid must meet or exceed listed minimum acceptable bid). All bidders will receive copies of the bid results.

In addition to timber sales, the Florida

Forest Service conducts salvage sales and miscellaneous forest product sales and leases such as:

- Pine straw
- Pine cones
- Palmetto fans
- Cabbage palm trees and fronds
- Palmetto berries
- Crooked wood
- Cattle grazing leases
- Apiary leases

Timber buyers who wish to receive open bid notifications for their area should contact the State Lands Management Coordinator at [Jason.Love@FreshFromFlorida.com](mailto:Jason.Love@FreshFromFlorida.com) or (850) 681-5891.



## Geocaching on Florida State Forests

Geocaching is an outdoor form of recreation that people of all ages may enjoy. It can be enjoyed by an individual, a family or a group. Through the use of a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit, people seek a hidden container, known as a cache. Within a cache there is usually a log book to confirm your find and sometimes there are even treasures in the cache that may be traded out for a treasure that you leave behind. The difficulty of the find can greatly depend on the type of cache. Some caches are simply camouflaged containers, while others may be highly disguised and hard to notice.

The Florida Forest Service allows geocaching within Florida State Forests. A member of the public who wishes to install a cache in a state forest must submit a request to the state forest [here](#).

Once reviewed and if approved, a State Forest Use Permit will be issued. Each State Forest has the authority to approve, decline or place restrictions on caches. Approval or denial of the request may be communicated via email.

[Click here to see a List of geocache sites on Florida State Forests](#)



By Chelsea Ealum, Communications & PR Coordinator

Recently, Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Adam H. Putnam and the Florida Forest Service announced plans to unveil the 36th state forest in spring 2015. Newnans Lake State Forest will offer more than 1,000 acres of diverse ecosystems, recreation and timber in Alachua County.

“The Florida Forest Service is excited to provide yet another opportunity for residents to enjoy Florida’s great outdoors,” Commissioner Putnam said. “Newnans Lake State Forest will be a haven for outdoor enthusiasts and families to discover the many benefits our natural resources have to offer.”

Management of Newnans Lake State Forest will include various multiple-use land objectives. It will be primarily managed for public recreation, with new trails for hikers and bicyclists. Visitors will experience a diverse ecosystem bustling with wildlife. The forest will also be used as a site for future Operation Outdoor Freedom events for Florida’s

wounded veterans and will be managed for sustainable timber resources.

Newnans Lake State Forest is located on the western edge

Newnans Lake State Forest will offer more than 1,000 acres of diverse ecosystems, recreation and timber in Alachua County

of Newnans Lake in Alachua County and extends into the city of Gainesville near Morningside Nature Center. The Florida Forest Service is currently working to construct new multi-use trails for future forest visitors. The forest will open to the public once necessary safety and accessibility enhancements are completed. The grand opening of Newnans Lake State Forest is projected for spring 2015.

In addition to Newnans Lake State Forest, the Florida Forest Service is responsible for the

## New State Forest Coming to Gainesville

Florida Forest Service announces plans to unveil 36th state forest in spring 2015

management of 35 other state forests throughout Florida. It is the agency’s primary mission, while managing these lands, to protect and maintain the biological diversity of the many ecosystems found in and around the state forests while integrating public use of the resources.

Outdoor recreational opportunities on Florida State Forests are as diverse as the resources themselves. Many areas of Florida State Forests are open to public access, but some areas may require a State Forest Use Authorization. Authorizations can be obtained in advance by contacting the state forest you plan to visit.

For more information on Florida State Forest management and recreational opportunities, visit <http://flash.floridastateforest.com/at-a-glance/recreation-at-a-glance.html>



Brickman Way, Trailwarrior

## First Trailwarrior to Reach 500 Milestone

By Lorna Radcliff, Recreation Specialist

Brickman Way has set another first, having hiked 500 miles in Florida's state forests. He was the first to reach the 250 milestone in 2013, now followed by two other avid hikers, Chad Von Dette and Jeffrey Tupper.

Brickman started the trailwalker program in August, 2009. He hiked the Holly Hammock trail at Ross Prairie State Forest noting how it was very well laid out and marked. "On my second hike I saw the rare Etoniah Rosemary in flower in Etoniah State Forest," explains Brickman. "This is a plant that only exists in one county in Florida, so I felt very privileged to have found it. After that I was hooked and wanted to see more."

By October, he had completed his Trailwalker level and was starting his Trailblazer level with his hike on the Ellaville trail at Twin Rivers State Forest. He followed it up in January with a hike there again

at Anderson Springs where he noted that in his opinion, it was the best trail yet.

In January 2011, Brickman completed his Trailmaster level with a hike along the Sulphur Island trail at Seminole State Forest. He remarked that the Sulphur Island Trail was a nice isolated loop with lots of buck scrapes.

Brickman has hiked 250 miles at seven different forests in the past 16 months since his first milestone, the Trailwarrior 250.

"My favorite Florida ecosystem is sandhill because of the wide variety of flowering plants, majestic longleaf pine and wide-reaching views," Brickman said. "Naturally, I love places that preserve this type of habitat like the Croom and Citrus Tracts of Withlacoochee State Forest. However, Goethe State Forest

holds a special place for me with not only excellent sandhill habitat but also thousands of acres of flatwoods, swamps and grassy ponds full of abundant wildlife."

As he hikes, Brickman takes advantage of the opportunities to capture photographs to enter for the State Forest Photo Contest. His entries have earned top photograph honors in the nature, creative and recreation categories throughout the years. He was also a quarterly winner for his photo, "Impressionist Sunset" taken at Goethe State Forest.

Brickman's original trail nickname was Heartpine, but as the first Trailwarrior, he now hails the trail nickname, "The Brickway 500". If you meet him along the trail, though, he still prefers his original trail name.

Congratulations Brickman!

## Trailwalker Program Levels

### TRAILWALKER:

Walk a total of 10 trails in a minimum of five Florida State Forests.

### TRAILBLAZER:

Walk 20 trails from an additional five forests to achieve the second level.

### TRAILMASTER:

Walk 30 total trails to achieve the third level.

### TRAILWARRIOR:

For those who just can't get enough hiking in Florida state forests, the Trailwarrior level was added in 2013 with new milestones.

The trailwarrior level required hikers to maintain their trail log, including miles of any of the trails from Florida State Forests.

Once a hiker reaches a milestone (250 miles, 500 miles, 750 miles and 1,000 miles), they will mail in their trail log to the Florida Forest Service to receive recognition.

Previous miles hiked for the Trailmaster level will count toward the overall Trailwarrior milestone achievements. Those who did not keep track of their miles while achieving the trailmaster level should use 100 miles as their starting number and track from there.

## Be a Trailwalker!

### Lace up your hiking boots!



Florida state forest hiking trails are a wonderful way to experience nature's rich beauty. Hiking deep into the forests lets visitors experience an isolation characteristic of old Florida, providing space, solitude and self-reliance.

Most people are day hikers. Adventurous hikers who wish to attempt longer trips should obtain permits for overnight camping while hiking.

Regardless of your style, the Florida Forest Service encourages you to participate in the Trailwalker Program. For more information on this and other hosted outdoor recreational opportunities, visit [www.FloridaForestService.com](http://www.FloridaForestService.com).



## The Arbor Day Foundation: A True Friend of Florida State Forests

By Doug Ott, Friends of Florida State Forests Program Coordinator

Partnerships with individuals and organizations are vital to reforestation efforts on Florida State Forests. Partner contributions help to increase Longleaf pine numbers in Florida while restoring its natural ecosystems. The longleaf pine/wiregrass ecosystem once covered more than 90 million acres in the southeastern United States. Fewer than 4 million acres remain today.

The Florida Forest Service has made a concerted effort on state forestland to rebuild Florida's Longleaf pine forests. Since 2001, the Florida Forest Service has reforested more than 52,000 acres in Longleaf pine. One organization that

has been a true friend, and the Florida Forest Service's largest reforestation partner, is the Arbor Day Foundation. Since 2009, they have contributed approximately \$610,000 toward purchasing nursery stock. This has aided reforestation efforts on 16 state forests including Belmore, Blackwater River, Cary, Four Creeks, Goethe, Jennings, Lake George, Indian Lake, John M. Bethea, Myakka, Okaloacoochee Slough, Point Washington, Seminole, Tate's Hell, Tiger Bay and Welaka.

The Arbor Day Foundation, established in 1972, is dedicated to planting trees, with more than 1 million members, supporters

and valued partners. The Florida Forest Service and Friends of Florida State Forests strive to partner with individuals and organizations like the Arbor Day Foundation to help reestablish Longleaf pine in the Southeast by continuing reforestation efforts on state forestland.

If you or your organization would like to join these efforts, please contact [Doug.Ott@FreshFromFlorida.com](mailto:Doug.Ott@FreshFromFlorida.com) or visit [www.FloridaStateForests.org](http://www.FloridaStateForests.org).

With your help, we can make the forests better for everyone!

## Longleaf Pine Restoration

By Brian Camposano, State Forest Ecologist

Longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) is an integral part of numerous natural vegetative plant communities across the southeastern United States (Longleaf Pine Ecosystem Geodatabase Final Report 2014). In fact, longleaf pine ecosystems contain one of the richest species diversities in the world (outside of the tropics), due in large part to the contribution of herbaceous and understory plants. Historically, these iconic ecosystems once comprised roughly 60 percent of the landscape of the southeastern Coastal Plain (an estimated 92 million acres), but have now been reduced to less than 4 percent of that acreage (Florida Forest Resources Statewide Assessment 2010, Jose et al. 2006), largely in part due to habitat fragmentation, urbanization, conversion to other land uses, and exclusion of natural fire regimes, among others.

In 2009, America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative outlined goals in the "Range-wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine" to increase longleaf pine acreage, as well as maintain, improve, and restore existing longleaf pine forests on public and private lands.

(Continued on Pg 11)

## Florida Forest Service To Plant 2 Million New Trees

In honor of Florida's recent Arbor Day, the Florida Forest Service announced the planting of more than 2 million new trees on more than 3,000 acres of state forests this year. "The Florida Forest Service celebrates the countless ways trees benefit our lives," said State Forester Jim Karels. "Trees moderate temperature extremes, reduce storm water runoff, absorb air pollutants and create a more pleasant environment."





## Prescribed Fire Awareness Week

The Florida Forest Service will promote the benefits of prescribed fire during Prescribed Fire Awareness Week, January 25-31. Prescribed fire plays a vital role in maintaining the health of Florida's nearly 17 million acres of forestlands and preventing devastating wildfires.

Prescribed fire is a safe way to reduce brush and overgrowth that would otherwise become hazardous fuel for wildfire. Using prescribed fire to reduce buildup of hazardous fuels helps decrease the risk of a devastating wildfire.

The Florida Forest Service oversees one of the most active prescribed fire programs in the country. In an average year, the Florida Forest Service issues 120,000 authorizations, allowing people and agencies to prescribe burn their land. Currently, there are more than 1,600 Certified Prescribed Burn Managers in Florida that treat 2.3 million acres of agricultural and natural lands annually with prescribed fire.

For more information about how to apply prescribed fire to your own land management practices, visit [FloridaForestService.com](http://FloridaForestService.com) or contact a local [field office](#) near you.



Firewise Retrofit Demonstration House

## Firewise Communities in Florida

By Chelsea Ealum, Communications and PR Coordinator

Firewise Communities is a national program that helps landowners and communities take action to prevent damage from devastating wildfires.

According to its website, "The National Fire Protection Association's Firewise Communities program teaches people how to adapt to living with wildfire and encourages neighbors to work together and take action now to prevent losses."

To become a nationally recognized firewise community, neighbors work together to accomplish the five steps of Firewise recognition:

1. Obtain a Wildfire Risk Assessment as a written document from the Florida Forest Service.



2. Form a board or committee and create an action plan based on the assessment.

3. Conduct a Firewise Day event

4. Invest a minimum of \$2 per capita in local Firewise actions for the year.

5. Submit an application to your state Firewise Liaison.

The Firewise Communities program has had a strong presence in Florida for many years. There are currently 56 active Firewise Communities in the State of Florida. This year, Florida's Firewise citizens submitted the highest per-capita individual community investment in the country, contributing \$3 million.

To learn more about the Firewise Communities USA program, contact a Florida Forest Service Wildfire Mitigation Specialist in your area or visit [www.Firewise.org](http://www.Firewise.org)

## This Month's Q&A Wildfire Tips

**Q:** How can I burn yard debris in a safe and legal manner?

**A.** To burn safely and legally, adhere to the following:

- Check local ordinances and requirements for outdoor burning.
- Burn only if significant rainfall has occurred in the last 3 or 4 days.
- Never burn on dry or windy days.
- Select a burn location that is at least 25 feet from forests, 25 feet from your home, 150 feet from other occupied buildings and 50 feet from any paved public roadway.
- Clear the burn area of other flammable materials.
- Keep a shovel and water hose handy in case the fire starts to escape containment.
- Never leave a fire unattended and make sure it is out before leaving.



*Clay County Fire Rescue personnel and nine federal excess trucks leased from the Florida Forest Service*

# Florida's Firefighter Federal Excess Program

Firefighting equipment from the Firefighter Federal Excess Program helps increase safety and create savings for Florida's citizens.

By Matt Weinell, Fire Resource Manager

For decades, the Florida Forest Service has helped rural fire departments obtain no-cost lease equipment through the Firefighter Federal Excess Program (FFP). This program has been the backbone for rural and volunteer fire departments across the state.

Each federal excess vehicle or piece of equipment is screened by the Florida Forest Service and is provided to local fire departments. Once supplied, fire departments then convert the equipment into firefighting apparatus for structure fire and wildfire suppression, emergency services, and natural resource protection.

Fire departments need the ability to quickly move large volumes of water to a fire scene. The equipment from FFP increases the ability to respond quickly and effectively which, in turn, may help lower a community's ISO fire suppression rating. A lowered ISO fire suppression rating may also mean lowered insurance rates for homeowners. The additional firefighting resources provided through FFP increase safety and create savings for the citizens of Florida.

Florida's small rural fire departments have invested their very limited budgets in this life saving equipment for years. FFP equipment, coupled with the Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) 50/50 Grant program, can make acquiring adequate fire suppression equipment much more affordable. Fire Departments will often obtain a federal excess vehicle from the Florida Forest Service and then use a VFA grant to make it "fire ready." VFA grants help fund paint jobs, bodywork repair or conversion, the purchase of communication radios, and more. VFA grants can also cover training costs, hand tools, and firefighting gear. These are significant cost savings for day-to-day operations.

FFP equipment can also be used for non-fire emergency services. Since 2009, New Smyrna Beach Fire Rescue has been using a federal excess Zodiac boat to assist stranded boaters and provide other emergency medical services to people close to shore and around their port facilities.

The Florida Forest Service also provides assistance to other Florida state agencies through this program. The Florida Forest

Service has twenty-five federal excess 2.5 Ton Cargo Trucks on lease to the Department of Environmental Protection's Florida Park Service. They are used to protect and manage environmentally sensitive lands throughout the Florida State Park system.

The Florida Forest Service's own Aviation Fire Suppression and Detection program is also outfitted through federal excess. They currently maintain and fly five Super Huey and two OH-58 firefighting helicopters. These ships and a majority of otherwise costly replacement parts are all acquired through the Federal Excess program. The Florida Forest Service also flies four federal excess fixed-wing airplanes as part of its fire detection fleet. This is a significant cost savings, as the current inventory shows over \$19 million in federal excess aviation assets.

For more information about the Federal Excess Program please contact Matt Weinell, Fire Resource Manager, at (850) 681-5931, or John Kelley, Property Consultant, at (386) 758-0461.

(See Pg 11 for FFP Gallery of Images)

## Wildlife Best Management Practices

*Continued from pg 4*

The Florida Forest Service and FWC are working cooperatively to provide outreach and educational opportunities for forestry landowners and practitioners. For more information about the new Wildlife Best Management Practices, please contact Jeff Vowell at (850) 681-5943 or [Jeff.Vowell@FreshFromFlorida.com](mailto:Jeff.Vowell@FreshFromFlorida.com). To learn more about the Florida Forest Service and its programs, visit [www.FloridaForestService.com](http://www.FloridaForestService.com).

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## Longleaf Pine Restoration

*Continued from pg 8*

To help achieve these goals, the Florida Forest Service, in conjunction with the Florida Natural Areas Inventory, developed a Longleaf Pine Ecosystem Geodatabase and rapid assessment methodology to inventory and assess the status of longleaf pine in Florida. Presently, Florida has 2.2 million confirmed longleaf pine forest acres, which is the most for any state range-wide. Still, the Florida Forest Service recognizes the need to replant longleaf pine and restore these unique landscapes and continues this vital effort as part of its ongoing mission. The Florida Forest Service is, and will continue to be, committed to reforestation, improving forest health, and restoring this diverse landscape on state forests, benefiting not only the ecosystem, but the residents of the State of Florida.

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**NOTE: Title photos on Pages 1-3 and 5 were provided by Photographer Leslie Robertson and the National Association of State Foresters.**

## Firefighter Federal Excess Program Gallery of Images

*Continued from pg 10*



Williston Fire Rescue using federal excess Airport Crash Truck, CR-72, at Williston Airport, training with the 160th Special Air Regiment 3rd Battalion Delta Company War Dogs.



New Smyrna Beach Fire Rescue conducts training with Zodiac boat on loan from the Florida Forest Service.



Super Huey Forestry 22 responding to a wildfire