

FLORIDA'S FOREST ACTION PLAN – NATIONAL PRIORITIES

NATIONAL PRIORITIES SECTION –Update Report

STATE OF FLORIDA 2015

The 2008 Farm Bill, under Title VIII – Forestry, amends the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, to include the requirement that each state develop a long-term, state-wide assessment and strategies for forest resources. These assessments and strategies focused on three national priorities:

- Conserve and Manage Working Forest Landscapes for Multiple Values and Uses
- Protect Forests from Threats
- Enhance Public Benefits from Trees and Forests

These documents were developed with a comprehensive team of stakeholders to address cross-boundary, landscape scale actions that would be the most efficient activities to address issues of concern developed for the assessment phase of the Forest Action plan.

This document serves as a record of activities taken by all Florida stakeholders to address strategic actions taken as part of Florida's Forest Action Plan and will be updated as required.

1. Conserve and Manage Working Forest Landscapes for Multiple Values and Uses

Issue Addressed: Wildfire Threat/Use of Prescribed Fire

Goal 1: Maintain a prescribed fire program that protects the right to burn, encourages the wise use of prescribed fire, and promotes public understanding of prescribed fire with the effect of doubling the acres (to roughly 4 million acres/year) burned annually to bring fire-adapted systems to maintenance fire phase.

Objective 1.5: Establish and sustain a high priority for prescribed fire on public lands.

Strategy 1.5.4: Review the state prescribed fire certification program. Improve and enhance as necessary.

Strategic Action: Recent statute and rule changes provide more opportunity for certified burners to burn and clarifies time frame for completing process.

Strategy 1.5.5: Use regional fire strike teams to significantly increase prescribed fire management to meet the Goal.

Strategic Action: The Florida Forest Service participates in several regional cooperatives to increase burning across the state, GCPEP, ARSA, Lake Wales Ridge Area. We also host the National Interagency

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Prescribed Fire Training Center modules and provide the contacts to other state and local agencies so the modules can burn with them.

Issue Addressed: Economic Viability of Forests

Goal 1: Ensure forests remain in sustainable forest production.

Objective 1.1: Provide incentives to encourage forest ownership and management.

Strategy 1.1.7: Collaborate with natural resource agencies to provide streamlined land management recommendations and assistance.

Strategy 1.1.8: Provide framework for improving landowner understanding and utilization of non-timber markets and new timber market opportunities.

Strategic Action: A pilot landscape scale project in the panhandle, Forest Opportunities in Resource Conservation and Environmental Security (FORCES) connects the Florida Forest Service, Eglin Air Force Base, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Longleaf Alliance with private landowners to recognize active management that meets all parties' objectives of keeping forests in forests.

FORCES

Forest Opportunities for Resource Conservation & Environmental Security

Natural Resource Conservation Management Plan



2. Protect Forests from Threats

Issue Addressed: Wildfire Threat/Use of Prescribed Fire

Goal 2: Maintain a wildfire mitigation and prevention program that reduces fire occurrence, hazardous conditions and the risk of loss from wildfires.

Objective 2.1: Select mitigation projects based on wildfire risk.

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Strategy 2.1.1: Use SFRAS, CWPP's, Communities at Risk data, Firewise Community/USA plans, and DOF district/center mitigation action plans to prioritize local mitigation projects.



Strategic Action: The Florida Forest Service in conjunction with the other twelve states in the southeastern region have developed the above web application to allow the public and community planners to see where and what their wildfire risk is. The application provides reports that are useful in the development of CWPPs.

Objective 2.2: Provide mitigation work – prescribed fire or mechanical treatment

Strategy 2.2.1: Significantly increase the use of prescribed fire as a fuel management and hazard mitigation tool.

Strategic Action: The Florida Forest Service has authorized the prescribed burning of over two million acres a year for the past ten years. This past year the number was over 2.5 million acres.

Strategy 2.2.2: Increase the use Regional Fire Management Teams and/or District/Center resources prescribed fire or other fuel management assistance on private and public lands.

Strategic Action: Our four Regional Wildfire Management teams in conjunction with our fifteen field units undertake mitigation projects that involve either prescribed burning or mechanical fuel reduction or a combination of both. Examples below show prescribed burning on the left and mechanical on the right.

Goal 4: Continue to provide adequate training for emergency response to wildfires, all-hazard incidents and prescribed fire implementation.

Objective 4.1: Provide for the safety of emergency responders and citizens.

Strategy 4.1.2: Work with local fire departments to ensure minimum training needs are being met.

Strategic Action: All structural firefighters are now required as part of the certification process to complete S-130, S-190 and L-180.

Goal 6: Maintain an equipment fleet of sufficient size and ability to provide adequate fire suppression capabilities and prescribed fire support to meet the demands of increasing fire activity and intensity.

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Objective 6.2: Provide Communication and Dispatch Center capabilities.

Strategy 6.2.1: Maintain communications center to facilitate dispatch and coordination of resources on incidents.

Strategic Action: The Florida Forest Service has upgraded our communications network in several ways. We have replaced all of our hand held radios and are currently working on replacing all of our mobile radios in our front line equipment with P25 compliant radios. We have also upgraded our dispatch consoles and converted to repeaters. New dispatch console is computer based and the screen is pictured below:



Strategy 6.2.2: Provide for safety of personnel and resources through asset tracking.

Strategic Action: The Florida Forest Service has deployed in all of our front line fire suppression vehicles a radio based asset tracking system. Picture of display in supervisor vehicle:



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Issue Addressed: Forest Health: Insects, Diseases, and Non-Native Pest Plants

Goal 3: Continuation and expansion of meaningful cost-share programs for private forest landowners and other appropriate publics to promote risk reduction for and/or management of threatening forest pests (e.g. Southern Pine Beetle, NNIPs such as cogongrass etc.):

Strategy 3.1.4: Continue and expand current private landowner pilot cost-share program for treatment of cogongrass infestations in northern Florida through 2013 at minimum.

Strategic Action: A cogongrass program has continued to be funded through a multi-state competitive resource allocation project. During the 2014 calendar year an additional 17 contracts for private landowner treatment of 250.15 acres of cogongrass occurred, providing \$16,555.88 cost-share funding for control.



Cogongrass infestation in Jackson County, Florida.

3. Enhance Public Benefits from Trees and Forests

Issue Addressed: Longleaf Pine Ecosystems

Goal 1: Reliable and accurate inventories and assessments of Longleaf Pine Ecosystems on public and private land exist in accessible databases.

Strategy 1.1.1: Survey public land management agencies in Florida to determine whether longleaf pine ecosystems have been identified and inventoried...

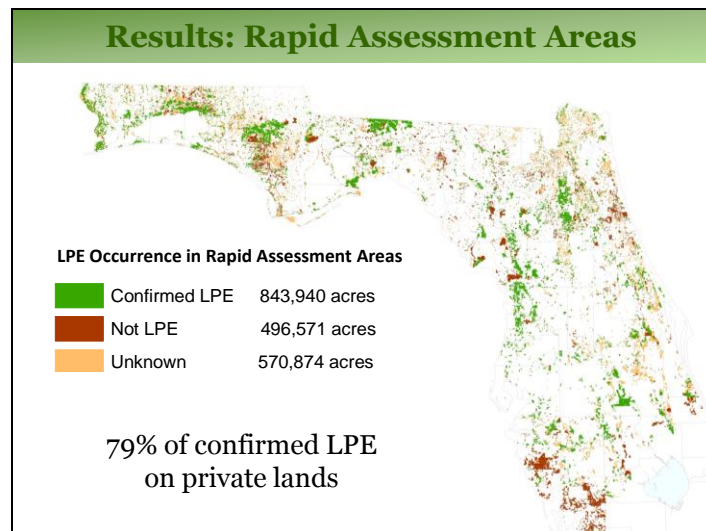
Strategic Action: The Florida Forest Service was awarded a Competitive Resource Allocation Project to partner with the Florida Natural Areas Inventory to develop initial public land information regarding existence of longleaf pine acreages on these lands.

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Strategy 1.1.2: Follow up the survey with a meeting of agencies and partners to evaluate results and to determine if development of a consistent methodology, common definitions and common metrics across jurisdictional lines is feasible and desired.

Strategic Action: The Florida Forest Service hosted a partners meeting in August of 2014 to evaluate the results of the longleaf pine geodatabase. This meeting resulted in a follow up document to more clearly define requested sections, note data gaps, and develop strategies for further refining project.

The geodatabase project was presented to the Longleaf Partnership Council in October and significant continued interest was generated.



Longleaf Pine rapid assessment locations.

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Objective 1.5: Establish and sustain a high priority for prescribed fire on public lands.

Strategic Action: Prescribed fire continues to be a priority on our State Forests. Just this past fiscal year 2014/15 the Florida Forest Service treated a record 246,104 acres on State Forests with prescribed fire.



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Goal 5: (Environmental Control) Maintain an assessment of the wildfire risk across the state by: analyzing the presence and availability of vegetative fuels, monitoring weather conditions, tracking wildfire occurrence and monitoring development in the wildland/urban interface.

Objective 5.1: Develop a strategy that will allow the current wildland fire risk assessment to be updated without intensive field study and at a substantially lower cost than the latest update.

Strategy 5.1.2: Inventory available Florida data that is being collected by public and private sector that can be used to assist with both the canopy and surface fuels data in place of plot data inventory by DOF on a recurring basis.

Strategic Action: Canopy inventory completed by Florida Forest Service using grant monies and surface fuels updated using SWRA project.