



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF Environmental Protection

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3900 Commonwealth Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399

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Governor

Jeanette Nuñez
Lt. Governor

Alexis A. Lambert
Secretary

June 16, 2025

Mr. Brian Camposano
Florida Forest Service
Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
3125 Conner Boulevard, Room 236
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1650

RE: Kissimmee Bend State Forest – Lease No. 4836

Dear Mr. Camposano:

On **June 13, 2025**, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) recommended approval of the **Kissimmee Bend State Forest** management plan. Therefore, Division of State Lands, Office of Environmental Services (OES), acting as agent for the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund, hereby approves the **Kissimmee Bend State Forest** management plan. The next management plan update is due June 13, 2035.

Pursuant to s. 253.034(5)(a), F.S., each management plan is required to describe both short-term and long-term management goals and include measurable objectives to achieve those goals. Short-term goals shall be achievable within a 2-year planning period, and long-term goals shall be achievable within a 10-year planning period. Upon completion of short-term goals, please submit a signed letter identifying categories, goals, and results with attached methodology to the Division of State Lands, Office of Environmental Services.

Pursuant to s. 259.032(8)(g), F.S., by July 1 of each year, each governmental agency and each private entity designated to manage lands shall report to the Secretary of Environmental Protection, via the Division of State Lands, on the progress of funding, staffing, and resource management of every project for which the agency or entity is responsible.

Pursuant to s. 259.036(2), F.S., management areas that exceed 1,000 acres in size, shall be scheduled for a land management review at least every 5 years.

Pursuant to s. 259.032, F.S., and Chapter 18-2.021, F.A.C., management plans for areas less than 160 acres may be handled in accordance with the negative response process. This process requires small management plans and management plan amendments be submitted to the Division of State Lands for review, and the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) for public notification. The Division of State Lands will approve these

Mr. Brian Camposano

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June 16, 2025

plans or plan amendments submitted for review through delegated authority unless three or more ARC members request the division place the item on a future council meeting agenda for review. To create better efficiency, improve customer service, and assist members of the ARC, the Division of State Lands will notice negative response items on Thursdays except for weeks that have State or Federal holidays that fall on Thursday or Friday. The Division of State Lands will contact you on the appropriate Friday to inform you if the item is approved via delegated authority or if it will be placed on a future ARC agenda by request of the ARC members.

Conditional approval of this land management plan does not waive the authority or jurisdiction of any governmental entity that may have an interest in this project. Implementation of any upland activities proposed by this management plan may require a permit or other authorization from federal and state agencies having regulatory jurisdiction over those particular activities. Pursuant to the conditions of your lease, please forward copies of all permits to this office upon issuance.

Sincerely,

Sine Murray
Office of Environmental Services
Division of State Lands

TEN-YEAR LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN
FOR THE
KISSIMMEE BEND STATE FOREST
OKEECHOBEE COUNTY



Photo courtesy of Florida Natural Areas Inventory

PREPARED BY
FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES
FLORIDA FOREST SERVICE

APPROVED ON
JUNE 16, 2025

TEN-YEAR LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN
FOR THE
KISSIMMEE BEND STATE FOREST



Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard W. Dolan", written over a horizontal line.

Richard Dolan, Director
Florida Forest Service

A handwritten date "6/23/2025" in black ink, written over a horizontal line.

Date

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Roberts", written over a horizontal line.

James Roberts, Chief
Forest Management Bureau

A handwritten date "6/23/25" in black ink, written over a horizontal line.

Date

**TEN-YEAR LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN
KISSIMMEE BEND STATE FOREST
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KISSIMMEE BEND STATE FOREST
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LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LEAD AGENCY: Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), Florida Forest Service (FFS)
COMMON NAME: Kissimmee Bend State Forest
LOCATION: Okeechobee County
ACREAGE TOTAL: 1,992 acres

Historic Natural Communities	Approximate Acreage
Dry Prairie	756
Slough Marsh	581
Wet Prairie	364

Historic Natural Communities	Approximate Acreage
Depression Marsh	245
Mesic Hammock	46

TIITF LEASE AGREEMENT NUMBERS: 4836

USE: Single ☐ Multiple ☒

MANAGEMENT AGENCY

FDACS, Florida Forest Service
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
South Florida Water Management District
Department of State, Division of Historical Resources

RESPONSIBILITY

General Forest Resource Management
Wildlife Resources & Laws
Water Resource Protection & Restoration
Historical & Archaeological Resource Management

DESIGNATED LAND USE: Multiple-Use State Forest
SUBLEASES: None
ENCUMBRANCES: None
TYPE ACQUISITION: Florida Forever acquisition project
UNIQUE FEATURES: Globally imperiled dry prairie is the primary natural community
ARCHAEOLOGICAL / HISTORICAL: No (0) known sites
MANAGEMENT NEEDS: Continued restoration and maintenance of native ecosystems and protection of archaeological and historical sites if discovered
ACQUISITION NEEDS: None
SURPLUS ACREAGE: None
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT: Management Review Team, Management Plan Advisory Group, Management Plan Review Public Hearing & Kissimmee Bend State Forest Liaison Committee -----

DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE (FOR DIVISION OF STATE LANDS USE ONLY)

ARC Approval Date: _____ TIITF Approval Date: _____

Comments: _____

I. Introduction

Kissimmee Bend State Forest (KBSF) is located within the Everglades Headwaters and Kissimmee River Basin. The 1,992-acre property was purchased through the Florida Forever Acquisition Program in April 2020 with the primary objectives of protecting water quality and quantity in the Kissimmee River and Lake Okeechobee watersheds and implementing resource-based outdoor recreation opportunities. The name is derived from the distinct western bend in the Kissimmee River directly west of the property.

The dominant features of KBSF are the dry prairies and associated isolated wetland communities. The forest's biologically rich grasslands are a significant part of the Everglades Headwaters ecosystem. This unique ecosystem is known for its rare and diverse wildlife, including the Florida grasshopper sparrow, Florida scrub-jay and the crested caracara. The globally imperiled dry prairie is the primary natural community found at KBSF, though examples of depression marsh, mesic hammock, slough marsh and wet prairie can also be found.

A. General Mission and Management Plan Direction

The primary mission of the FFS is to “protect Florida and its people from the dangers of wildland fire and manage forest resources through a stewardship ethic to assure they are available for future generations.”

Management strategies for KBSF center on the multiple-use concept, as defined in sections 589.04(3) and 253.034(2)(a), Florida Statutes (F.S.). Implementation of this concept will utilize and conserve state forest resources in a harmonious and coordinated combination that will best serve the people of the State of Florida, and that is consistent with the purpose for which the forest was acquired. Multiple-use management for KBSF will be accomplished with the following strategies:

- Practice sustainable forest management for the efficient generation of revenue and in support of state forest management objectives;
- Provide for resource-based outdoor recreation opportunities for multiple interests;
- Restore and manage healthy forests and native ecosystems ensuring the long-term viability of populations and species listed as endangered, threatened, or rare, and other components of biological diversity, including game and non-game wildlife and plants;
- Protect known archaeological, historical, and cultural resources;
- Restore, maintain, and protect hydrological functions, related water resources, and the health of associated wetland and aquatic communities; and
- Provide research and educational opportunities related to natural resource management.

This management plan is provided according to requirements of Sections 253.034, 259.032, and 373, Florida Statutes (F.S.) and was prepared utilizing guidelines outlined in Section 18-2.021 of the Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.). It is not an annual work plan or detailed operational plan but provides general guidance for the management of KBSF for the next ten-year period and outlines the major concepts that will guide management activities on the forest.

B. Past Accomplishments

Insofar as the property was recently acquired in April 2020, the management activities and goals continue to be developed for KBSF. Data regarding past management activities and public use on KBSF have been compiled monthly and are available from the forest manager. A table has been prepared for this plan that summarizes the accomplishments for each of the past four years. See Exhibit A. The table does not attempt to account for all activities on the forest, but summarizes major activities, nor does it list the multitude of daily activities and public interactions involved in managing KBSF. Among the most notable accomplishments have been the following:

- Conducted prescribed burns on 2,887 acres
- Marked 3.5 miles of boundary; equating to one half (1/2) of the forest perimeter
- Treated one acre of cogongrass
- Improved 0.1 miles of road
- Liaison Committee of private citizens and interested parties assembled in February 2022.

C. Goals / Objectives for the Next Ten-Year Period

The following goals and objectives provide direction and focus of management resources for the next ten-year planning period. Funding, agency program priorities, and the potential for wildfire during the planning period will determine the degree to which these objectives can be met. Management activities on KBSF during this period must conserve, protect, utilize, and enhance the natural and historical resources and manage resource-based outdoor recreation, which is compatible with the conservation and protection of this forest. Most of the management operations will be conducted by the FFS, although some activities will be contracted to private sector vendors or completed with the cooperation of other agencies. All activities will enhance the property's natural resource or public recreation value.

The management activities listed below will be addressed within the ten-year management period and are defined as short-term goals, long-term goals, or ongoing goals. Short-term goals are goals that are achievable within a two-year planning period, and long-term goals are achievable within a ten-year planning period. Objectives are listed in priority order for each goal. Other activities will be completed with minimal overhead expense and existing staff.

➤ GOAL 1: Sustainable Forest Management

Objective 1: Develop and implement the Five-Year Silviculture Action Plan including prescribed burning and understory restoration. (Ongoing objective)

Performance Measures:

- Annual updates of the Five-Year Silviculture Action Plan completed
- Continued implementation of the Five-Year Silviculture Action Plan (acres treated)

Objective 2: Continue to implement the FFS process for developing stand descriptions and conducting forest inventory, including maintaining a GIS database containing forest stands, roads, and other attributes (including but not limited to: rare, threatened, and endangered species, archaeological and historical resources, invasive species locations). (Ongoing objective)

Performance Measures:

- Updated GIS database and re-inventory of all attributes as required by FFS procedures

- Number of acres inventoried

➤ **GOAL 2: Public Access and Recreation Opportunities**

Objective 1: Maintain public access and recreation opportunities that are compatible with multiple-use management. (Ongoing objective)

Performance Measure: Number of visitor opportunities per day

Objective 2: Evaluate the potential for additional public access and recreation opportunities on KBSF that are compatible with multiple-use management. Recreation opportunities will fall under the scope of multiple-use management in accordance with watershed protection, conservation, ecosystem restoration, and as detailed in the purpose for acquisition. (Short-term objective)

Performance Measure: List of viable access points and visitor opportunities for consideration

Objective 3: Continue to safely integrate visitor use into KBSF, develop the Five-Year Outdoor Recreation Plan, and update annually. (Ongoing objective)

Performance Measures:

- Continued implementation of the Five-Year Outdoor Recreation Plan
- Annual updates of the Five-Year Outdoor Recreation Plan completed

Objective 4: Continue to involve and meet with the Liaison Committee. The purpose of Liaison Committee meetings is to facilitate communication between the FFS and committee members (and the groups they represent) about state forest management and to obtain feedback from these entities. The Liaison Committee consists of local residents, community leaders, special interest group representatives (vendors, hunters, and other recreation users, etc.), environmental group representatives, and other public / private entities. (Ongoing objective)

Performance Measures:

- Liaison Committee remains organized
- Annual meetings continue

Objective 5: Maintain cooperation with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to develop specific hunting season quotas and bag limits, and to address hunting issues which are to be agreed upon at an annual cooperator meeting between FFS and FWC. (Ongoing objective)

Performance Measures:

- Annual letter on agreed-upon hunting issues
- Updated rules posted and WMA brochures available online at MyFWC.com

Objective 6: Recruit volunteers and volunteer organizations to assist with recreation and / or resource management. (Ongoing objective)

Performance Measures:

- Number of volunteers and organizations that assist with projects
- Number of hours provided by volunteers

➤ **GOAL 3: Habitat Restoration, Improvement, and Fire Management**

Objective 1: The KBSF currently contains approximately 1,992 acres of fire-dependent communities. To achieve an average a fire-return interval of 1 to 4 years for most communities in the forest, FFS will attempt to conduct prescribed burns on an average of approximately 500 – 1000 acres per year. Currently FFS staff estimates 1,992 acres at KBSF are within the desired fire-return interval. (Ongoing Objective)

Performance Measures:

- Number of acres burned during the dormant and growing seasons
- Number of acres burned within target fire-return interval

Objective 2: Continue to annually update and implement the Five-Year Prescribed Burning Management Plan and the prescribed burning goals. (Ongoing Objective)

Performance Measures:

- Annual updates of the Five-Year Prescribed Burning Management Plan completed
- Continued implementation of the Five-Year Prescribed Burning Management Plan (acres treated)

Objective 3: Reduce the threat of wildfire within the wildland urban interface on KBSF and the surrounding community through a comprehensive mitigation strategy that includes evaluating vegetative fuels near residential areas and identifying potential fuel reduction projects. (Ongoing Objective)

Performance Measures:

- Evaluation complete
- Should fuel reduction be necessary, the number of acres treated for fuel reduction

Objective 4: Utilize prescribed fire to enhance restoration of native groundcover. Evaluate areas where native groundcover has been eliminated or heavily impacted from historical land use on a case-by-case basis for alternative methods to address reestablishment of native groundcover plants. Restore native groundcover where practical or heavily impacted from historical land use. (Long-term objective)

Performance Measure: Number of acres restored

➤ **GOAL 4: Listed and Rare Species Habitat Maintenance, Enhancement, Restoration, or Population Restoration**

Objective 1: In cooperation with FWC, develop a Wildlife Management Strategy addressing the wildlife species for KBSF, with emphasis on imperiled species and associated management prescriptions for their habitats. (Long-term objective)

Performance Measures:

- Imperiled species management strategy completed
- Baseline-listed and rare species list completed for KBSF

Objective 2: In consultation with FWC, implement survey and monitoring protocols, where feasible, for listed and rare species. (Ongoing objective)

Performance Measure: Number of species for which monitoring is ongoing

➤ **GOAL 5: Invasive Species Maintenance and Control**

Objective 1: Continue to follow and annually update the Five-Year Ecological Plan for KBSF, to locate, identify, and control invasive species. (Ongoing objective)

Performance Measures:

- Total number of acres identified and successfully treated
- Annual updates of the Five-Year Ecological Plan completed
- Continue to maintain KBSF invasive database information annually

➤ **GOAL 6: Cultural and Historical Resource Management**

Objective 1: Ensure all Ground Disturbing Activities are managed in compliance with the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources (DHR) Florida Master Site File. (Ongoing objective)

Performance Measure: Number of Ground Disturbing Activities handled per DHR guidelines

Objective 2: Request an archeological survey of KBSF to determine if any archeological resources exist on site. (Long-term objective)

Performance Measure: Completed archeological survey through the Public Lands Archaeology program.

Objective 3: Ensure that any sites discovered during Ground Disturbing Activities are recorded in the DHR Master Site file. (Ongoing objective)

Performance Measure: Send any newly recorded site(s) to DHR Master Site file as needed and monitor the recorded site(s)

Objective 4: Maintain at least one (1) qualified staff member as an Archaeological Resource Management (ARM) monitor. (Ongoing objective)

Performance Measure: Number of local staff trained as ARM monitors

➤ **GOAL 7: Hydrological Preservation and Restoration**

Objective 1: Protect water resources during management activities through the implementation of Silviculture Best Management Practices (BMP) that are applicable to forest road maintenance and construction, construction of pre-suppression firelines, timber stand improvement activities, sinkholes, etc. (Ongoing objective)

Performance Measure: Percent compliance with Silviculture BMP

Objective 2: Close, rehabilitate, or restore those roads, firelines, and trails that have evidence of erosion into surrounding water bodies causing alterations to the hydrology and / or water quality. (Ongoing objective)

Performance Measures:

- Number of roads, firelines, and trails closed, rehabilitated, and / or restored
- Number of culverts installed or maintained

Objective 3: Conduct or obtain a site assessment / study to identify potential hydrology restoration needs. (Short-term objective)

Performance Measure: Assessment conducted

➤ **GOAL 8: Capital Facilities and Infrastructure**

Objective 1: KBSF staff, along with help from volunteers and / or user groups, will construct and maintain three (3) primitive campgrounds, and will maintain 1.3 miles of road existing on the forest. (Ongoing objective)

Performance Measure: Number of existing facilities constructed and maintained and number of miles of roads maintained

Objective 2: Continue to follow the Five-Year Roads and Bridges Management Plan and update annually. (Ongoing objective)

Performance Measures:

- Continued implementation of the Five-Year Roads and Bridges Management Plan
- Annual updates of the Five-Year Roads and Bridges Management Plan completed

Objective 3: Continue to implement the Five-Year Boundary Survey and Maintenance Management Plan and update annually. Approximately 20 percent of the forest boundary will be remarked annually as necessary which includes harrowing, reposting signage, and repainting boundary trees. (Ongoing objective)

Performance Measures:

- Continued implementation of the Five-Year Boundary Survey and Maintenance Management Plan
- Percentage of forest boundary maintained each year
- Annual updates of the Five-Year Boundary Survey and Maintenance Management Plan completed

II. Administration Section

A. Descriptive Information

1. Common Name of Property

The common name of the property is the Kissimmee Bend State Forest.

2. Legal Description and Acreage

The KBSF is comprised of 1,992.12 acres.

The forest is located in Sections 11, 12, 13, and 14 in Township 34 South, Range 32 East; and Sections 7 and 18, Township 34 South, Range 33 East, Okeechobee County. The boundaries are identified in Exhibit B and Table 1.

Table 1. KBSF Acreage by Funding Source

Funding Source	Acres
Triple Diamond Florida Forever Project	1,992.12

A complete legal description of lands owned by the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (TIITF) is on record at the Okeechobee District Office, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), and the FFS State Office in Tallahassee.

3. Proximity to Other Public Resources

Lands managed by state, federal, or local government for conservation of natural or cultural resources that are located within approximately 25 miles of the KBSF are included in Exhibit E and Table 2.

Table 2. Nearby Public Conservation Land and Easements

Tract	Managing Agency	Distance
Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park	DRP	Adjacent N
USFWS Refuge Kissimmee Bend Unit	USFWS	Adjacent E
USFWS Okeechobee Unit	USFWS	Adjacent SE
Wetlands Reserve Program Easement	NRCS	Adjacent W
Corona Ranch Conservation Easement	FDACS	2 miles S
Kissimmee River PUA	SFWMD	3 miles WSW
Avon Park Bombing Range	DOD	6 miles NW
DeLuca Preserve	UF	12 miles NE
Lake Wales Ridge NWR	USFWS	13 miles W
Lake Wales Ridge WMA	FWC	17 miles W
Lake Wales Ridge State Forest	FFS	18 miles NW
Fort Drum WMA	SJRWMD	22 miles NE
Highlands Hammock State Park	DEP	23 miles W

DEP – Department of Environmental Protection

DOD – Department of Defense

DRP – FDEP Division of Environment Protection

FDACS – Florida Department of Agriculture and
Consumer Services

FFS – Florida Forest Service

FWC – Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

NRCS – Natural Resources Conservation Service

SFWMD – South Florida Water Management District

SJRWMD – Saint Johns River Water Management District

USFWS – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services

4. Property Acquisition and Land Use Considerations

In April 2020, FFS acquired the 1,992-acre property located within the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge. The acquisition is part of the Triple Diamond Florida Forever project and conserves significant dry prairie habitat, as well as other high-quality habitats in an area of Florida known for its rare vertebrate wildlife, endangered natural communities, and significant hydrological initiatives. See Table 3 and Exhibit D.

Table 3. Parcel Acquisition

Parcel Name	Lease Date	Lease No.	Acres
Kissimmee Bend	4/13/2020	4836	1,992

B. Management Authority, Purpose, and Constraints

1. Purpose for Acquisition / Management Prospectus

The primary purpose of acquisition by the State of Florida was to preserve significant dry prairie, important in the long-term protection of this native natural community and the rare species that it supports, as well as provide recreation and research opportunities. KBSF is a part of the Triple Diamond Florida Forever project. Triple Diamond, along with existing conservation lands, contributes to a large, contiguous protection area of more than 200,000 acres. See Exhibit Q.

The permanent protection of the property was made possible through the acquisition work of the Open Space Institute (OSI) with the support of the Wyss Foundation. OSI purchased the land from the Wold Family, who actively managed the tract as a native range since 1976.

Management is provided by FFS with assistance, as warranted, from other agencies. FFS manages forest resources, recreation, water resource protection, watershed protection, and land use planning on KBSF.

Revenue derived from recreation is planned to offset incurred expenses, capital improvements, and Other Personal Services (OPS).

2. Degree of Title Interest Held by the Board

The TIITF holds fee simple title to all 1,992.12 acres of KBSF, with no reservations or encumbrances.

3. Designated Single or Multiple-Use Management

KBSF is managed under a multiple-use concept by the FFS, under the authority of Chapters 253 and 589, F.S. The FFS is the lead managing agency as stated in TIITF Management Lease number 4836.

Multiple-use management is the harmonious and coordinated management of timber, recreation, conservation of fish and wildlife, forage, archaeological and historic sites, habitat and other biological resources, or water resources so they are utilized in the combination that will best serve the people of the state, making the most judicious use of the land for some or all these resources and considering the relative values of the various resources. Local demands, acquisition objectives, and other factors influence the array of uses that are compatible with and allowed on any specific area of KBSF. This management approach is believed to provide for the greatest public benefit, by allowing compatible uses while protecting overall forest health, native ecosystems, and the functions and values associated with them.

4. Revenue Producing Activities

No significant revenue is expected to be initially generated. The future revenue will depend on the nature and extent of public use and the use of the facilities already on the property. Additional revenue producing activities will be considered when they have been determined to be financially feasible and will not adversely impact management of the forest. Current and potential revenue producing activities for the KBSF include, but are not limited to:

- *Recreation Fees* – Fees may be collected for day use activities, annual passes, and vendor / special use permits.
- *Privately Sponsored Recreation Events* – Currently no events have taken place.
- *Apiary Leases* – There are currently no (0) apiary leases on KBSF. The feasibility of pursuing and establishing apiary leases on KBSF in areas where appropriate will be evaluated in accordance with guidelines stated in the State Forest Handbook.
- *Grazing Leases* – There are currently no (0) grazing leases on KBSF.

5. Conformation to State Lands Management Plan

Management of the forest under the multiple-use concept complies with the State Lands Management Plan and provides optimum balanced public utilization of the property. Specific authority for the FFS's management of public land is derived from Chapters 253, 259 and 589 F.S.

6. Legislative or Executive Constraints

There are no known legislative or executive constraints specifically directed toward KBSF.

FFS makes every effort to comply with applicable statutes, rules, and ordinances when managing the forest. For example, when public facilities are developed on state forests, every effort is made to comply with Public Law 101-336, the Americans with Disabilities Act. As new facilities are developed, the universal access requirements of this law are followed in all cases except where the law allows reasonable exceptions (e.g., where handicap access is structurally impractical or where providing such access would change the fundamental character of the facility being provided).

7. Aquatic Preserve / Area of Critical State Concern

This area is not within an aquatic preserve or an area of critical state concern, nor is it in an area under study for such designation.

C. Capital Facilities and Infrastructure

1. Property Boundaries Establishment and Preservation

KBSF boundary lines, seven (7) miles in total, are managed by state forest personnel in accordance with the guidelines of the State Forest Handbook. There are four (4) gates throughout KBSF that require periodic maintenance. Twenty percent (20%) of the state forest boundary lines are to be maintained annually, or once every five years, by clearing, repainting, and reposting, and placement of state forest boundary signs by FFS personnel.

2. Improvements

Infrastructure present on the KBSF include two (2) wells. See Exhibit C.

3. On-Site Housing

There are no residences located on KBSF. Housing is prioritized based on FFS policy.

FFS may establish on-site housing (mobile / manufactured home) on KBSF if deemed necessary to alleviate security and management issues. The need and feasibility for the state forest will be evaluated and established if considered appropriate by the District Manager and approved by the FFS Director. Prior to the occurrence of any ground disturbing activity for establishing on-site housing, a notification will be sent to the Florida Division of Historical Resources (DHR) and Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) for review and recommendations. The need and feasibility specific for the forest will be evaluated and established if considered appropriate by the Okeechobee District Manager and approved by the FFS Director.

4. Operations Infrastructure

a. Operations Budget

There is no operations budget for KBSF. Personnel, budget, and equipment resources are derived from the expense budget for the Okeechobee District with support from Forest Management as warranted. Implementation of any of the activities within this management plan is contingent on annual district budget, availability of funding, other resources, and other statewide priorities.

b. Equipment

To carry out the resource management work on KBSF, as well as to maintain forest improvements such as trails, roads, and facilities, the following equipment is available for work on KBSF:

- 2017 Kubota UTV 4x4, with trailer
- Swamp Buggy
- Farm Tractor with tiller, mower, and grapple

c. Staffing

KBSF is managed under the direction of a Forest Area Supervisor. Additional staff are assigned to the forest as needed and include a Senior Forester as well as other district personnel.

The Forest Area Supervisor (FAS) will work to achieve the goals outlined in this management plan. Recreation planning and management activities as well as resource management and planning activities, such as trail flagging/identification, recreation facility placement, timber cruising, and sale administration, etc., are the responsibility of the FAS under the direction of the District Manager. Forest operations, such as road maintenance, operations/recreation facility maintenance, prescribed burning, etc., are the responsibility of the Forest Area Supervisor under the direction of the District Manager.

To augment the staff working on KBSF, the FAS is responsible for recruiting interested volunteers who can bring needed experience and skills to assist with the management of the forest recreation program as well as the resource management activities.

D. Additional Acquisitions and Land Use Considerations

1. Alternate Uses Considered

No alternate uses are being considered at this time. Alternate uses will be considered as requests are made and will be accommodated as appropriate if they are determined to be compatible with existing uses and with the management goals and objectives of KBSF. Uses determined as incompatible include but are not limited to water resource development projects, water supply projects, storm-water management projects, sewage treatment facilities, linear facilities, off highway vehicle use, dumping, mining, and oil well stimulation (e.g., hydraulic fracturing/fracking), or as determined by law, regulation, or other incompatible uses as described elsewhere in the management plan. Deadhead logging is not compatible with nor considered appropriate use within or adjacent to state forest boundaries. No water resource projects are being considered at this time on KBSF.

2. Additional Land Needs

There are no additional land needs for KBSF. KBSF is completely bounded by conservation land to the north, east and west. Lands to the south are in conservation easements.

3. Surplus Land Assessment

On conservation lands where FFS is the lead manager, FFS assesses and identifies areas for potential surplus land. This consists of an examination of resource and operational management needs, public access and recreation use, and GIS modeling and analysis.

The evaluation of KBSF by FFS has determined that all portions of the area are being managed and operated for the original purposes of acquisition, as well as center on the multiple-use concept, as defined in sections 589.04(3) and 253.034(2)(a), F.S. Implementation of this concept will utilize and conserve state forest resources in a harmonious and coordinated combination that will best serve the people of the State of Florida. Therefore, no portion of the KBSF is recommended for potential surplus.

4. Adjacent Conflicting Uses

FFS will cooperate with adjacent property owners, prospective owners, or prospective developers to discuss methods to minimize negative impacts on management, resources, facilities, roads, recreation, etc., and discuss ways to minimize encroachment onto the forest.

5. Compliance with Local Comprehensive Plan

This plan was submitted to the Board of County Commissioners in Okeechobee County for review and compliance with their local comprehensive plans. See Exhibit R.

6. Utility Corridors and Easements

FFS does not favor the fragmentation of natural communities with linear facilities. Consequently, easements for such uses will be discouraged to the greatest extent practical. The FFS does not consider KBSF suitable for any new linear facilities.

When such encroachments are unavoidable, previously disturbed sites will be the preferred location. The objectives, when identifying possible locations for new linear facilities, will be to minimize damage to sensitive resources (e.g., listed species and archaeological sites), minimize habitat fragmentation, limit disruption of management activities, including prescribed burns, and limit disruption of resource-based multiple use activities such as recreation.

Collocation of new linear facilities with existing corridors will be considered but will be used only where expansion of existing corridors does not increase the level of habitat fragmentation and disruption of management and multiple-use activities. FFS will further encourage the use of underground cable where scenic considerations are desirable as well as encourage the development and use of wildlife crossings for unavoidable roadway development projects. Easements for such utilities are subject to the review and approval of FDACS and the TIITF. Requests for linear facility uses will be handled according to the Governor and the Cabinet's linear facilities policy.

E. Agency & Public Involvement

1. Responsibilities of Managing Agencies

FFS is the lead managing agency, responsible for overall forest management and public recreation activities, as stated in TIITF Management Lease number 4836. Pursuant to the management lease, the lead managing agency may enter into further agreements or to subleases on any part of KBSF.

FFS will cooperate with the DHR regarding appropriate management practices on historical or archaeological sites on the property as stated in Section 267.061, F.S. FFS will consult DHR prior to the initiation of ground disturbing activities as required per DHR guidelines.

FWC assumes law enforcement responsibilities and conducts other wildlife management activities with input from FFS.

The SFWMD will be consulted and involved in matters relating to water resources and hydrological restoration as appropriate.

Additionally, a State Forest Liaison Committee of private citizens and representatives of forest user groups meet annually to provide input on forest management activities and share their ideas with FFS staff to improve the forest.

2. Law Enforcement

Primary law enforcement responsibilities will be handled by FWC law enforcement officers. Rules governing the use of KBSF are stated in Chapter 5I-4, F.A.C. FWC will enforce fish and wildlife regulations and aid in enforcing state forest rules. FWC does not currently have an officer dedicated to patrolling and enforcement on KBSF. This task is shared among multiple FWC officers who also patrol and enforce laws on properties and waterways outside of KBSF.

The FDACS Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement (OALE) will assist with open burning and wildfire investigations as needed. The Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office provides additional assistance as needed.

Special rules under Chapter 5I-4, F.A.C. were promulgated for FDAC, FFS, to manage the use of state lands and better control traffic and oversee camping and other uses on KBSF.

3. Wildland Fire

The FFS has the primary responsibility for prevention, detection, and suppression of wildfires wherever they may occur. The FFS shall provide leadership and direction in the evaluation, coordination, allocation of resources, and monitoring of wildfire management and protection (F.S. 590.01). The FFS also has the responsibility of authorizing prescribed burns (F.S. 590.02 [1][i]).

4. Public and Local Government Involvement

This plan has been prepared by FFS and will be carried out primarily by the FFS. FFS responds to public involvement through liaison committees, management plan advisory groups, public hearings, and through ongoing direct contact with user groups.

The plan was developed with input from the KBSF Management Plan Advisory Group and was reviewed at a public hearing on January 29, 2025. A summary of the advisory group's meetings and discussions, as well as written comments received on the plan, are included in Exhibit S. The Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) public hearing and meeting serve as an additional forum for public input and review of the plan.

5. Volunteers

Volunteer recruitment will be an important asset to KBSF in support of the FFS mission. Volunteer activities may occur as one-time events or in association with recurring projects and routine maintenance. Additional volunteer recruitment will continue to assist furthering the FFS mission.

6. Friends of Florida State Forests

Friends of Florida State Forests, Inc. (FFSF) is a Direct Support Organization (DSO) of the Florida Forest Service. FFSF supports management activities and projects on Florida's state forests. FFSF is established by Florida statute, supports programs within Florida's state forests, and is governed by a board of directors representing all areas of the state. Through community support, FFSF assists the FFS to expand opportunities for recreation, environmental education, fire prevention, and forest management within Florida's state forests.

The FFSF program is referenced in Chapter 589.012, F.S. For more information visit: www.floridastateforests.org.

III. Archaeological / Cultural Resources and Protection

A. Past Uses

Dry prairie once covered a considerable area in southern Florida, but much less remains today. Lightning fires have naturally maintained the grass communities and provided forage for numerous generations of cattle. Early settlers to the area gathered cattle left behind by the first Spanish explorers. Prior to the State of Florida's acquisition, the property was managed for cattle grazing with a mixture of improved and native range since 1976.

B. Archaeological and Historical Resources

A review of information contained in the Florida Department of State, DHR, Florida Master Site File has determined there are no (0) recorded archeological sites and no (0) historical structures found within the designated area for KBSF. See Exhibit F.

C. Ground Disturbing Activities

Representatives of DHR and FNAI will be consulted prior to the initiation of proposed ground disturbing activity as required per DHR guidelines. FFS will make every effort to protect known archaeological and historical resources. FFS will follow the "Management Procedures for Archaeological and Historical Sites and Properties on State Owned or Controlled Lands" and

will comply with all appropriate provisions of Section 267.061(2)(a,b) F.S. See Exhibit G. Any significant ground disturbing activity proposal will be submitted to DHR's Compliance and Review office for review prior to undertakings and allow the Division a reasonable opportunity to comment. Ground disturbing activities not specifically covered by this plan will be conducted under the parameters of the Interim Management Guidelines.

D. Survey and Monitoring

Currently, no local district FFS staff is trained by DHR as an Archaeological Resource Management (ARM) monitor. FFS will pursue opportunities for additional personnel to receive ARM Monitor training. FFS will consult with public lands archaeologists at DHR, as necessary, to determine an appropriate priority and frequency of monitoring at each of the listed sites, and any protection measures that might be required. Unless required on a more frequent basis, all archaeological and historical sites within the forest will be monitored at least annually. FFS field staff will monitor the listed sites to note condition and any existing or potential threats.

Any known archaeological and historical sites will be identified on maps to aid state forest personnel and if necessary, law enforcement personnel in patrolling and protecting sites. Applicable surveys will be conducted by trained FFS staff or contracted archaeologists during the process of planning and implementing multiple-use management activities. FFS personnel will remain alert for any environmentally significant resource discoveries and protective actions will be taken as necessary. In addition, FFS will seek the advice and recommendations of DHR regarding any additional archaeological survey needs. Trained monitors will oversee limited types of ground disturbing activities in which DHR recommends monitoring. FFS will utilize the services of DHR Public Lands archaeologists, when available, to locate and evaluate unknown resources, and to make recommendations in the management of known resources.

IV. Natural Resources and Protection

The primary purpose for FFS management of KBSF is to preserve the water quality of the region and provide additional resource-based recreational opportunities. The forest will be managed so as to restore, protect, and manage ecosystem functions while allowing compatible public uses. Management activities will be executed in a manner to minimize soil erosion and maintain and protect/enhance the hydrological resources on KBSF. If problems arise, corrective action will be implemented by FFS staff under the direction of the FFS Forest Hydrology Section. Efforts will be made to monitor and protect KBSF's waterbodies and their associated water quality and native plants and animals.

KBSF falls within the jurisdiction of the SFWMD. FFS will coordinate with SFWMD and / or FDEP, as necessary, on activities pertaining to water resource protection and management. Any activities requiring water management district permits will be handled accordingly. FFS will work with SFWMD to ensure that levels and quality of ground and surface water resources are appropriately monitored.

A. Soils and Geologic Resources

1. Resources

Soil information for KBSF was obtained from the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). KBSF contains four (4) major soils. Of the major soils, predominant soils listed by the NRCS include Floridana / Riviera / Placid soils, Myakka fine sand, Valkaria fine sand, and Immokalee fine sand. Detailed information on all soils present on the forest may be found in Exhibit H.

2. Soil Protection

Management activities will be executed in a manner to minimize soil erosion. As problems arise, corrective action will be implemented by FFS staff under the direction of the FFS Forest Hydrology section in conjunction with recommendations as contained in the most current version of the Florida Silviculture BMP Manual.

Currently there are no major or significant soil erosion problems on KBSF.

B. Water Resources

The water resources on KBSF perform essential roles in the protection of water quality, groundwater recharge, flood control, and aquatic habitat preservation. In the interest of maintaining these valuable resource functions, state forest management personnel will work with the FFS Hydrology Section to incorporate wetlands restoration into the overall resource management program as opportunities arise, particularly where wetland systems have been impaired or negatively impacted by previous management activities or natural disasters. See Exhibit J for map of the water resources on KBSF.

1. Resources

Water resources on KBSF consist of seasonal ponds. There are no perennial ponds or streams.

2. Water Classification

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Standards Development Section reports there are no waters on or near the forest listed as exceptions to Class III according to subparagraph 62-302.400, F.A.C.; therefore, all of the surface waters on or adjacent to the site are classified III waters (Fish Consumption; Recreation, Propagation and Maintenance of a Healthy, Well-Balanced Population of Fish and Wildlife), which is the statewide default classification under subsection 62-302.400, F.A.C.

According to subsection 62-302.700(9), F.A.C., there are no Outstanding Florida Waters (OFWs) on, adjacent to, or near the forest. See Exhibit I.

3. Water Protection

The acquisition and management of this public land had among its objectives to optimize ecological restoration, protect, and manage existing natural resources, and facilitate sensible public use. Concern over a continuous usable source of fresh water requires emphasis on protecting this vital resource. Water resource protection measures, at a minimum, will be accomplished using BMPs as described in the most current version of the Silviculture BMP

Manual.

4. Swamps, Marshes, and Other Wetlands

KBSF contains approximately 1,144 acres in three (3) hydric communities: slough marsh, wet prairie, and depression marsh. Maintenance of naturally occurring wetland communities is a high priority and will be accomplished through appropriate management activities, including prescribed fire, invasive species management, and adherence to Silviculture BMPs.

5. Wetlands Restoration

Wetland restoration objectives on the state forest include erosion control, restoration of water levels and / or hydroperiod, and restoration of wetland plant and animal communities. To achieve these objectives, restoration activities may involve road and soil stabilization, water level control structure removal or installation, invasive species control, site preparation and re-vegetation with native wetland species, and project monitoring. These activities may be conducted individually or concurrently; implemented by FFS personnel or by non-FFS personnel under mitigation or grant contractual agreements. Wetland restoration projects should be conducted in conjunction with other restoration activities indicated elsewhere in this plan.

Where applicable, and with the assistance from the FFS Forest Management Bureau, KBSF personnel may pursue funding to develop and implement wetland restoration projects. Additionally, cooperative research among FFS, other state agencies, and the federal government will provide valuable information in determining future management objectives of wetlands restoration.

Wetland restoration will be coordinated with SFWMD and applicable partners. Any activities requiring permits from the water management district will be handled accordingly and will comply with the latest edition of the FFS Silviculture BMP Manual.

6. Florida Department of Environmental Protection Basin Management Action Plan

A Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) is a "blueprint" for restoring impaired waters by reducing pollutant loadings to meet the allowable loadings established in a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). It represents a comprehensive set of strategies, including, but not limited to permit limits on wastewater facilities, urban and agricultural best management practices, conservation programs, financial assistance, and revenue generating activities, all designed to implement the pollutant reductions established by the TMDL. These broad-based plans are developed with local stakeholders, as they rely on local input and local commitment, and are adopted by Secretarial Order to be enforceable.

The BMAP provides for phased implementation under Subparagraph 403.067(7)(a)1, F.S. The phased BMAP approach allows for the implementation of projects designed to achieve incremental reductions, while simultaneously monitoring and conducting studies to better understand the water quality dynamics (sources and response variables) in the watershed.

The KBSF is currently not within a BMAP project area.

C. Flora and Fauna Resources

1. Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species

The intent of FFS is to manage KBSF in a manner that will minimize the potential for wildlife species to become imperiled. FFS employees continually monitor the forest for threatened or endangered species while conducting management activities. Specialized management techniques will be used, as necessary, to protect or increase protection of rare, threatened, and endangered species, as applicable for both plants and animals. See Table 4.

Table 4. Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species Documented on KBSF

Common Name	Scientific Name	FNAI Global Rank	FNAI State Rank	Federal Status	State Status
Florida grasshopper sparrow	<i>Ammodramus savannarum floridanus</i>	G5T1	S1	LE	FE
Gopher tortoise	<i>Gopherus polyphemus</i>	G3	S3	N	ST
Crested caracara	<i>Caracara plancus</i>	G5	S2	T	FT

*** STATUS/RANK KEY**

Federal Status (USFWS): LE= Listed Endangered, LT= Listed Threatened, N= Not currently listed, C = Candidate species for which federal listing agencies have sufficient information on biological vulnerability and threats to support proposing to list the species as Endangered or Threatened. SAT, T(S/A) = threatened due to similarity of appearance. A species that is threatened due to similarity of appearance with another listed species and is listed for its protection. Species listed as T(S/A) are not biologically endangered or threatened and are not subject to Section 7 consultation.

State Status (FWC): Animals: FE = Listed as Endangered Species at the Federal level by the USFWS, FT = Listed as Threatened Species at the Federal level by the USFWS, F(XN) = Federal listed as an experimental population in Florida, FT(S/A) = Federal Threatened due to similarity of appearance, ST = State population listed as Threatened by the FWC, SSC = Listed as Species of Special Concern by the FWC, N = Not currently listed, nor currently being considered for listing.

Plants: LE = Endangered: species of plants native to Florida that are in imminent danger of extinction within the state, the survival of which is unlikely if the causes of a decline in the number of plants continue; includes all species determined to be endangered or threatened pursuant to the U.S. Endangered Species Act; LT = Threatened: species native to the state that are in rapid decline in the number of plants within the state, but which have not so decreased in number as to cause them to be Endangered; CE = Commercially Exploited; N = Not currently listed, nor currently being considered for listing.

FNAI Global Rank: G1= Critically Imperiled, G2 = Imperiled, G3= Very Rare, G4= Apparently Secure, G5= Demonstrably Secure, GNR = Element not yet ranked (temporary), G#? = Tentative rank, T# = Taxonomic Subgroup; numbers have same definition as G#'s.

FNAI State Rank: S1= Critically Imperiled, S2= Imperiled, S3= Very Rare, S4= Apparently Secure, S5 = Demonstrably secure in Florida, S#? = Tentative Rank.

2. Florida Natural Areas Inventory

The Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) is the single most comprehensive source of information available on the locations of rare species and significant ecological resources throughout Florida. FNAI has reported the following regarding KBSF. Also see Exhibit K.

a. Element Occurrences

FNAI element occurrences data layer includes occurrences of rare species and natural communities. For animals and plants, element occurrences usually indicate a viable population of the species. Based on the information available, this site appears to be located on or very near a significant region of scrub habitat, a natural community in decline that provides important habitat for several rare species within a small area. The FNAI database contains multiple records of gopher tortoise on the property.

Documented habitat includes depression marsh, dry prairie, mesic hammock, slough

marsh, and wet prairie.

b. Likely and Potential Habitat for Rare Species

In addition to documented occurrences, other rare species and natural communities may be identified on or near KBSF. Rare species and communities have been documented on the site, in addition to other likely or potential species as listed in Exhibit K.

c. Land Acquisition Projects

The site is within the Triple Diamond Florida Forever Project. This is part of the State of Florida's Conservation and Recreation Lands Acquisition Program. See Exhibit D.

FNAI recommends that professionals familiar with Florida's flora and fauna conduct a site-specific survey to determine the current presence or absence of rare, threatened, or endangered species before expansions or alterations are made to any facilities.

3. Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI) reports numerous records of listed species occurrences or critical habitats within the confines of the property. This includes state and federally listed endangered or threatened species.

Other findings by the FWC include:

- a. The property is located within high priority Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas for multiple species: short-tailed hawk (*Buteo brachyurus*), Florida burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia floridana*), and Florida grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum floridanus*).
- b. KBSF is located within an area of high Species Richness which indicates the total number of species within potential habitat identified in a specific location.
- c. KBSF is located in and adjacent to Priority Wetlands which are wetlands significant to listed wetland-dependent vertebrates.
- d. A robust eastern spotted skunk (*Spilogale putorius*) population is documented nearby on the Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area. Although the eastern spotted skunk is currently unlisted, it is designated as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need by FWC; which warrants consideration for the potential presence of these species.

These data represent only those occurrences recorded by FWC staff and other affiliated researchers. The database does not necessarily contain records of all listed species that may occur in a given area. Also, data on certain species are not entered into the database on a site-specific basis. Therefore, one should not assume that an absence of occurrences in their database indicates that species of significance do not occur in the area. See Exhibit L.

The FWC recommends the review of management guidelines in the published FWC Gopher Tortoise Management Plan to guide management actions for the gopher tortoise (*Gopherus*

polyphemus) on the forest. The FWC Gopher Tortoise Management Plan provides beneficial resource guidelines for habitat management and monitoring of the gopher tortoise. For reference, the FWC Gopher Tortoise Species Management Plan can be accessed at MyFWC.com.

The FWC recommends the review of management guidelines in FWC's published Species Action Plans for the management of imperiled, rare, and focal bird species. The FWC Species Action Plans provide beneficial resource guidelines for habitat management and monitoring of the respective species. For reference, the FWC Species Action Plans can be accessed at MyFWC.com.

4. Game Species and Other Wildlife

Wildlife management plays an important role in the management of resources on KBSF. FWC provides cooperative technical assistance in managing the wildlife and fish populations, setting hunting seasons, establishing bag and season limits, and overall wildlife and fish law enforcement on KBSF.

KBSF is managed for hunting and fishing as the Kissimmee Bend Unit of the Everglades Headwaters Wildlife Management Area and is regulated by FWC. Management of this area will be directed to the production of biological diversity and species composition consistent with existing natural community types. Such communities will be restored and/or maintained through habitat management. All biological resources will be managed to maintain diversity.

Notable wildlife species inhabiting the forest include American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*), white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*), wood stork (*Mycteria americana*), loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*), crested caracara (*Caracara plancus*), American white pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*), and swallow-tailed kite (*Elanoides forficatus*).

All wildlife species will be managed and protected through the restoration and maintenance of native ecosystems found on the forest. The State Forest Handbook provides additional details for such things as prescribed burning and ecological restoration.

5. Survey and Monitoring

FFS will implement species-specific management plans developed by FWC and other agencies as applicable. FFS will cooperate with FWC and other agencies in the development of new wildlife management plans and monitoring protocols, as necessary. Such plans will be consistent with rule and statute promulgated for the management of such species.

a. Gopher Tortoises

Belt transect surveys for gopher tortoise burrows have been conducted by FFS and FWC staff opportunistically, as needed, but generally in advance of land management activities that may impact tortoises (e.g., timber harvest). All surveys are done in cooperation with FWC.

No formal survey has been conducted. All future, formal surveys will be completed in cooperation with FWC.

b. Florida Black Bear

FFS will continue to cooperate with FWC to implement FWC's state-wide Florida Black Bear Management Plan, with an emphasis on maintaining sustainable black bear populations in suitable habitats throughout Florida for the benefit of the species and people.

c. Listed Plant Species

All known locations of listed or rare flora are GIS mapped, and location data are shared with FNAI.

d. Other Rare Biota Surveys

Surveys are done as time and staffing allow. High quality plant communities continue to incur ad hoc surveys for both invasive plants and animals.

Most of the isolated wetlands on KBSF have received a cursory biological survey from FNAI (2021), with rare and significant plant and animal species observed and documented. Assistance will be offered to FWC for gopher tortoise burrow commensals monitoring, as well as monitoring for other rare species as appropriate.

During routine management activities, incidental sightings of rare animals and plants are GIS mapped by FFS staff. All rare species data is collected and sent to FNAI annually.

6. Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site Feasibility Assessment

The FFS has assessed the feasibility of establishing a gopher tortoise recipient site on KBSF. Soil drainage classes present across the forest range from poorly drained to very poorly drained; often either frequently flooded or with a degree of surficial saturation during the wetter months of the year (see Exhibit H). Further, given the degree of prairie, there is insufficient tree cover to consider the establishment of a gopher tortoise recipient site. Therefore, the FFS has determined there are no suitable locations for gopher tortoise recipient site establishment on KBSF.

D. Sustainable Forest Resources

FFS practices sustainable multiple-use management to meet the forest resource needs and values of the present without compromising the similar capability of the future. Sustainable management involves practicing a land stewardship ethic that integrates the reforestation, managing, growing, nurturing, and harvesting of trees for useful products with the conservation of soil, air and water quality, wildlife and fish habitat, and aesthetics. This is accomplished by maintaining and updating accurate estimates of standing timber in order to assure that the timber resources retain their sustainability. Forest inventories will be updated on a continual basis according to guidelines established by the FFS Forest Management Bureau.

E. Beaches and Dune Resources

No beaches or dunes occur on the KBSF.

F. Mineral Resources

No mineral deposits of commercial value are known to exist on KBSF.

G. Unique Natural Features and Outstanding Native Landscapes

The forest's biologically rich grasslands are a significant part of the Everglades Headwaters ecosystem. This unique ecosystem is known for its rare and diverse wildlife, including the Florida grasshopper sparrow and the crested caracara.

H. Research Projects / Specimen Collection

Research projects may be performed on the forest on a temporary or permanent basis for the purpose of obtaining information that furthers the knowledge of forestry and related fields. FFS cooperates with other governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions, whenever feasible, on this type of research. FFS will consider assisting with research projects when funds and manpower are available.

All research to be considered on KBSF must be considered in accordance with the guidelines stated in the State Forest Handbook. Any requests for research should be submitted in writing to the appropriate field staff to be forwarded to the Forest Management Bureau for approval. Requests must include: a letter outlining the purpose, scope, methodology, and location of the proposed research. Requests are subject to review by FFS Foresters, Biologists, the Forest Health Section, and the Forest Hydrology Section, as appropriate. Authorization to conduct research will require that the investigator provide copies of any reports or studies generated from any research to the FFS and the KBSF staff. Other special conditions may be applicable, and the authorization may be terminated at any point if the study is not in compliance.

No research projects have been conducted on KBSF.

I. Ground Disturbing Activities

Although the FFS's approach to handling ground disturbing activities is identified in other sections of this plan, the FFS's overall approach to this issue is summarized here. FFS recognizes the importance of managing and protecting sensitive resources and will take steps to ensure that such resources are not adversely impacted by ground disturbing activities. Sensitive resources include areas such as known sensitive species locations; archaeological, fossil, and historical sites; ecotones, wetlands, and water resources. The process for evaluating and obtaining approval for ground disturbing activities is outlined in Appendix 2.A.6. of the State Forest Handbook.

When new pre-suppression firelines, recreation trails, or other low-impact recreation site enhancements are necessary, their placement will be reviewed by state forest field staff to avoid sensitive areas. For ground disturbing activities such as construction of buildings, parking lots, and new roads, the FFS will consult with FNAI, DHR, SFWMD, and ARC, as appropriate.

V. Public Access and Recreation

The primary recreation objective is to provide the public with passive outdoor recreation activities that are dependent on the natural environment and to provide outdoor recreation opportunities to wounded veterans through Operation Outdoor Freedom (OOF). FFS will continue to promote and

encourage public access and recreation use by the public while protecting resources and practicing multiple-use management.

Periodic evaluations will be conducted by FFS staff to monitor recreation impacts on resources. Modifications to recreation uses will be implemented should significant negative impacts be identified. New recreation opportunities and facilities, which are compatible with the primary goals and responsibilities of the FFS, will be considered only after FFS determines their compatibility with other forest uses and forest resources. Assessment of visitor impacts, outdoor recreation opportunities and facilities, and proposed changes will all be addressed in the Five-Year Outdoor Recreation Plan updates.

A. Existing Recreation Opportunities

A variety of recreation opportunities are available on the forest. Visitors can enjoy hiking (service roads only), hunting, wildlife viewing, night sky viewing, and photography. See Exhibit C for a map of the Recreation, Facilities, and Improvements.

The main trailhead and parking area for the forest are on the adjoining NWR off NW 256th Street.

B. Planned Recreation Activities

FFS will continue to assess plans for additional recreation opportunities based on demand, carrying capacity, demographics, and impact to the resources on the Forest. All planned improvements may be completed as staff and funding permits. Both terrestrial and aquatic resources and relative activities will be evaluated. Any plans will be incorporated into the Five-Year Outdoor Recreation Plan on file at KBSF.

1. Public Access and Parking

Within the ten-year planning cycle, the potential for new parking and forest access points will be evaluated and considered for use. Existing parking and forest access points will continually be evaluated for updates and improvements.

2. Recreation Trails

Currently, there is no immediate plan for establishing hiking trails within this ten-year planning cycle for KBSF. However, the potential for new hiking trails (separate from service roads) will be evaluated should the demand arise.

Within this ten-year planning cycle, consideration will be made for producing a birding brochure.

3. Environmental Education

Currently only self-guided tours are available. If a need is determined in the future, KBSF may implement an environmental education program which may include guided tours, additional self-guided tours, and hands-on events.

4. Camping

Potential dispersed primitive campsites will be hike-in or drive-in, tent-only sites. At a minimum, each site will consist of a tent pad, fire ring, lantern pole, and a picnic table.

Potential camp site locations are shown on the Facilities, Recreation, and Improvement Map. See Exhibit C.

5. Hunter and Hiker Education

FFS will continue communicating our needs and concerns with our user groups, cooperators, and our visitors. FFS is considering installing interpretive signs and / or kiosks detailing KBSF's unique ecosystem and FFS's sustainable management practices.

The Florida Forest Service will handle permitting requests for all recreation activities.

C. Hunter Access

Regulated hunting and fishing on Florida's state forests are managed cooperatively with the FWC. Hunting season dates, limits, and methods are established annually by FWC, in cooperation with FFS. Wildlife Management Area (WMA) regulations are updated annually and are identified in the current WMA brochures provided by FWC at www.MyFWC.com. Non-hunting recreation users are encouraged to check the WMA regulations and season dates before visiting KBSF.

OOF may host multiple events on KBSF. These events will involve outdoor recreation activities including, but not limited to, hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, clay shooting, and any other activity that is developed as an outdoor activity for wounded veterans. The supporting personnel will include state and private volunteers and any support personnel necessary for the operation, support, or funding of such events. Events can be recreation, fundraising, or planning in nature. The OOF program needs may include the upgrading of existing or construction of new facilities for lodging and recreation of participants, as well as logistical and operational needs of the program. On-site and offsite fundraising for the benefit of OOF may occur to assist in these efforts and will be performed under the coordination of and be consistent with the guidelines of the Friends of Florida State Forests.

D. Education

FFS may create partnerships with local K-12 schools and / or universities for the development and implementation of educational opportunities on KBSF. The Five-Year Outdoor Recreation Plan lends more insight to management activities as they pertain to future educational opportunities KBSF provides to the public.

VI. Forest Management Practices

A. Prescribed Fire

Forest management practices on KBSF are important in the restoration and maintenance of forest ecosystems and provide a variety of socio-economic benefits to Floridians. Management practices on KBSF include a prescribed fire program which is an effective tool in controlling the growth of hardwood trees, stimulating the recovery of native herbaceous groundcover, and promoting the regeneration of native pines.

FFS utilizes a fire management program on state forests that includes wildfire prevention, detection and suppression, and prescribed burning. This program is the responsibility of FFS's

Okeechobee District and is detailed in the Five-Year Prescribed Burning Management Plan. Emphasis will be placed on prescribed burning, wildfire prevention, and education to help reduce wildfire occurrence on the Forest.

A Fire History graph detailing the recent history of prescribed burns and wildfires at KBSF is available in Exhibit M.

FFS has one (1) fire tower, one (1) engine type 6, and two (2) tractor-plow units located in Okeechobee County. Additional support is available from neighboring counties. Personnel and equipment stationed in Okeechobee County will be used for pre-suppression practices, establishment of firebreaks, rehabilitation of existing firelines, construction of new firelines, maintenance of perimeter firebreaks, and prescribed burning.

The annual forest prescribed burning program produces multiple benefits. The purposes of prescribed burning on KBSF are to facilitate forest management operations; enhance wildlife and listed species habitat; decrease fuel loading; enhance public safety; and restore, maintain, and protect all native ecosystems, ecotones, and their ecological processes. FFS personnel are responsible for planning and implementing the annual prescribed burn program for KBSF, which will consist of dormant and growing season burns. An update to the Five-Year Prescribed Burning Management Plan is developed each year by FFS staff. All burns conducted on KBSF are executed by Florida Certified Prescribed Burn Managers in accordance with Chapter 590.125, F.S. and Rule Chapter 5I-2, F.A.C.

According to FNAI, historic, fire-dependent natural communities on KBSF are estimated to have occupied approximately 1,120 acres and to have burned at approximately 1 to 8-year intervals. Current fire-dependent communities encompass 1,050 acres. Some historically fire-dependent communities have been altered through past land use practices, which inhibits the ability to meet objectives with prescribed fire alone. Based on current conditions and management objectives, KBSF will plan for 350 to 1,050 acres to be prescribed burned annually. Priority ranking of burn units is used to keep fire return intervals maintained while slowly adding additional acreage. Meeting prescribed fire goals will be largely dependent on weather conditions, available personnel, and statewide emergency situations such as wildfires, hurricanes, and other natural disaster response and relief. Currently it is estimated that approximately 1,050 acres of KBSF are within the desired fire return interval.

1. Fire Management

The fire management plan will serve as a working tool and an informational document for KBSF. The plan will provide guidelines regarding wildfire suppression and prescribed fire management. It will specify burn units, burn unit prescriptions, appropriate fire return intervals, and fire suppression planning. The plan may be reviewed and amended as necessary.

The use of prescribed fire in the management of timber, wildlife, and ecological resources on KBSF is necessary if the FFS is to fulfill the goals and objectives stated in this plan including enhancing and restoring native plant communities, managing protected species, managing timber, recreation, historical, and other resource values. The fire management plan and its objectives shall reflect and incorporate these multiple-resource objectives.

a. Prescribed Fire:

Prescribed fire is the most important land management tool, both ecologically and economically, for managing vegetation and natural communities and perpetuating existing wildlife populations in Florida. Forest operation records and staff experience should be combined with the FNAI inventory and assessment (2021) to identify areas that may require mechanical or chemical treatments in conjunction with prescribed fire to restore a more natural vegetative structure.

- b. Burn Unit Plans:** Each prescribed fire will be conducted in accordance with FFS regulations and state law (Rule Chapter 5I-2 F.A.C.; Chapter 590 F.S.) and have a burn unit plan (or prescription). Each prescription will contain, at a minimum, the information, as required by Section 590.125(3), F.S., needed to complete the FFS Prescribed Burn Plan Form FDACS 11461.

Aerial ignition may be considered for large burn units where this tactic can be cost effective for larger acreages. Consideration should be given to rotating burn units between dormant and growing season burns over time. Fire return intervals for a burn unit are recommended to fall within the natural, historic range for the dominant natural community or communities within a given burn unit.

Based upon available species survey data, burn units within a prescription that have listed wildlife species shall explicitly state their presence and any restrictions or requirements relative to prescribed burning in proximity to these species or habitats. These may include time of year, pre-burn preparation, fire return intervals, and other burn parameters.

B. Wildfire Prevention and Mitigation Strategies

FFS utilizes a comprehensive wildfire management approach on state forests that includes an ongoing program of wildfire prevention, detection and suppression, and prescribed burning. Implementation of this program is the responsibility of FFS's Okeechobee District. Emphasis will be placed on consistent accomplishment of prescribed burning goals and community outreach to increase public understanding of wildfire prevention and the benefits of prescribed fire.

FFS has three paramount considerations regarding wildfires and are established in priority order:

- 1) Protection of human lives
- 2) Protection of improvements
- 3) Protection of natural resources

All procedures regarding wildfire will follow the State Forest Handbook and the KBSF Fire Management Plan.

1. Suppression Strategies

If a wildfire occurs on KBSF there are two (2) alternative suppression strategies as defined below:

- a. Contain and Control** is defined as a suppression strategy where a fire is restricted to a certain area by using existing natural or constructed barriers that stop the fires spread

under the prevailing and forecasted weather until it is out. This strategy allows the use of environmentally sensitive tactics based on fuels, fire behavior, and weather conditions that keep a wildfire from burning a large area or for a long duration.

- b. **Direct Suppression** is defined as a suppression strategy where aggressive suppression tactics are used to establish firelines around a fire to halt its spread and to extinguish all hotspots. This alternative is used whenever there is a threat to human life, property, private lands, and / or critical natural or cultural resources. This strategy should also be used when the total district fire load dictates that crews not be involved with individual fires for any longer than absolutely necessary.

Appropriate suppression action will be that which provides for the most reasonable probability of minimizing fire suppression cost and critical resource damage, consistent with probable fire behavior, total fire load, potential resource and environmental impacts, safety, and smoke management considerations. The Incident Command System (ICS) will be used for all suppression actions.

2. **Smoke Management**

Caution will be exercised to prevent a public safety or health hazard from the smoke of any prescribed burn or wildfire. Prescribed burns must pass the smoke screening procedure and be conducted by a certified burner. If smoke threatens to cause a safety hazard, then direct, immediate suppression action will be taken.

3. **Firebreaks and Firelines**

A system of permanent firebreaks is maintained around and within the boundaries of KBSF to guard against fires escaping from and entering the forest. Such firebreaks will consist of natural barriers, roads, trails, permanent grass strips and where appropriate, well maintained harrowed lines. All pre-suppression firebreaks will meet the established Silvicultural BMP criteria.

During wildfire suppression, the use of water and foam, permanent firebreaks, natural barriers, and existing roads and trails for firelines can be used when human life, safety, property, and resource considerations allow. Plowed and / or bladed lines will be used for initial installation of firelines in heavy fuels and in cases where it's considered necessary to protect life, property, or resources and / or to minimize threats to firefighters. Plowed and bladed lines will be rehabilitated and BMPs implemented as soon as practical after the fire is suppressed.

4. **Sensitive Areas**

KBSF has on file at the state forest headquarters an Environmentally Sensitive Area Map that identifies protected sites such as critical wetlands and archaeological and historical sites known to occur on the forest. FFS personnel are aware of these areas in the event of a wildfire. Special precautions will be followed when prescribed burning in sensitive areas on KBSF. When possible, fire staff will avoid line construction in wetland ecotones and other areas throughout the Forest.

5. Firewise Communities

FFS has implemented a Firewise community approach for prevention statewide. Specifically, in the area adjacent to or nearby KBSF, efforts in this regard will continue to identify communities at risk and to make contact with their representatives.

6. Adjacent Neighbor Contacts

The staff at KBSF maintains a list of neighbors who have requested they be notified in advance of prescribed burns. These neighbors are contacted by telephone or email with potential sites and dates of anticipated prescribed burns.

7. Post-Burn Evaluations

A post-burn evaluation is required for each prescribed burn on the state forest to assess impacts on timber and habitat. Based on the evaluations after prescribed fires in particular, decisions will be made on the effectiveness of the prescribed burn and improvements that can be made in the future. A historical fire record for all significant fires and prescribed burns will be maintained. This will be accomplished using completed burn plans and the maintenance of GIS data. These records are intended to provide data for future management decisions.

C. Sustainable Forestry & Silviculture

Timber is a valuable economic and ecological resource, and timber harvesting for the purposes of generating revenue, improving stand viability, forest health, wildlife, and ecological restoration and maintenance is critical to the silvicultural objectives on many forests. However, at this time, KBSF does not have any significant timber resources and any reference to timber management pertains to potential timber stands should any be acquired as part of this State Forest.

1. Strategies

The following silvicultural strategies will apply to silvicultural practices on KBSF, where applicable:

- a. To restore and maintain forest health and vigor through timber harvesting, prescribed burning, and reforestation, both naturally and artificially, with species native to the site.
- b. To create, through natural or artificial regeneration, uneven-aged, and even-aged management, a forest with both young and old growth components that yields sustainable economic, ecological, and social benefits.

2. Silvicultural Operations

Any future silvicultural operations on KBSF will be directed toward improving forest health, wildlife habitat, ecological and economical sustainability, as well as toward recovery from past management practices that are not in accordance with the objectives of this plan. Stands of off-site species with merchantable volume will be scheduled for harvest, followed by reforestation with the appropriate tree species. Herbicide applications may be necessary to control woody competition and to re-establish desired native species of both overstory and groundcover. Site preparation methods may include prescribed fire, mechanical vegetation

control, and / or herbicide applications. Herbicides used will be registered for forestry use by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and will not adversely affect water resources. The FFS has no plans to establish pine species within prairie community types, as these communities naturally do not support pine production.

Prescribed fire is the most desirable method of vegetation control in fire-dependent ecosystems. However, due to the existence of areas where fuel loads have reached dangerous levels or urban interface dictates prescribed fire is not suitable, mechanical, or chemical vegetation control may be used. Mechanical and / or chemical vegetation control will be utilized where appropriate as determined by FFS staff for wildlife enhancement, fuel mitigation, and reforestation.

On any applicable parcels that may be acquired as part of KBSF in the future, maintenance and restoration of timber stands and natural communities through timber harvesting will include thinning for maintenance, regeneration harvests applicable to the species present and clear-cutting to remove off-site species.

All silvicultural activities, including timber harvesting and reforestation, will meet or exceed the standards in FFS's Silviculture BMPs and the State Forest Handbook, and will follow the Five-Year Silviculture Action Plan.

3. Forest Inventory

The purpose of a forest inventory is to provide FFS resource managers with information and tools for short and long-range resource management and planning. Ten percent of the forest area will be re-inventoried annually to provide an accurate estimation of the standing timber and to ensure that stands will be managed sustainably, as appropriate.

Timber / forestry resources available on the property include pockets of mixed hardwood tree species and scattered hardwoods throughout the prairie communities.

4. Timber Sales

Timber sales are generally advertised for competitive bids and sold on a per unit or lump sum basis. All timber sales are conducted according to guidelines specified in the State Forest Handbook.

5. Cattle Grazing

Cattle grazing activities assist in maintaining pastures and controlling invasive plants, support the maintenance of fences and gates, and provide a source of income to the forest.

Currently there are no (0) cattle leases on KBSF.

D. Invasive Species Control

FFS employees continually monitor the forest for invasive species while conducting management activities. FFS will locate, identify, and apply control measures with the intent to eradicate or control invasive species. Table 5 lists the general treatment strategy, acres impacted,

and population stability trend for invasive plant species occurring on KBSF. Also see Exhibit N.

On-going maintenance and monitoring strategies are outlined in the Five-Year Ecological Management Plan which is developed to locate, identify, and control invasive plant species. Occurrences of invasive species are recorded in the KBSF GIS database and are monitored and treated annually as funding permits. The GIS database is updated as new infestations are discovered.

Adjacent landowners who are known to have these species on their property will be approached to cooperate on control measures. FFS works to control the spread of invasive species by decontaminating agency equipment and equipment used by private contractors according to the State Forest Handbook.

FFS will enlist support from FWC in the effort to control invasive animals. Feral hogs (*Sus scrofa*) are present on KBSF but are not believed to occur in significant numbers at this time. FWC has issued a feral hog control permit to FFS for all WMA state forests and FFS will allow for feral hog removal on KBSF through trapping and regulated hunting as necessary.

Training in the identification and control of invasive species will be scheduled for personnel as time and resources permit. Training concerning invasive plants will be coordinated with the Forest Management Bureau's Forest Health Section. Control of invasive species will be target specific and use a variety of methods including appropriately labeled and efficacious herbicide treatments.

Table 5. Invasive Plant Species Occurring on KBSF

Scientific Name	Common Name	Treatment Strategy	Acres Impacted	Treatment Status
<i>Hymenachne amplexicaulis</i>	West Indian marsh grass	herbicide	1.0	Increasing
<i>Imperata cylindrica</i>	Cogon grass	herbicide	2.0	Increasing
<i>Lygodium microphyllum</i>	Old world climbing fern	herbicide	1.0	Increasing
<i>Senna alata</i>	Candlestick plant	herbicide	0.25	Increasing
<i>Urena lobata</i>	Caesar's weed	herbicide	0.25	Increasing

E. Insects, Disease, and Forest Health

Currently there are no significant insect or disease problems on KBSF. In the event of a forest pest outbreak, KBSF resource managers will consult with the Forest Management Bureau's Forest Health Section to formulate an appropriate and effective response.

In compliance with Section 388.4111, F.S. and in Section 5E-13.042, F.A.C., all lands have been evaluated and subsequently designated as environmentally sensitive and biologically highly productive. Such designation is appropriate and consistent with the previously documented natural resources and ecosystem values and affords the appropriate protection for these resources from arthropod control practices that would impose a potential hazard to fish, wildlife, and other

natural resources existing on this property. The local arthropod control agency in Okeechobee County will be notified of the approval of this plan documenting this designation.

As a result, prior to conducting any arthropod control activities on KBSF, the local agency must prepare a public lands control plan that addresses all concerns that FFS may have for protecting the natural resources and ecosystem values on the state forest. In this regard, FFS will provide the local agency details on the management objectives for KBSF. This public lands control plan must be in compliance with FDACS guidelines and use the appropriate FDACS form. The plan must then be approved and mutually adopted by the county, FFS, and FDACS, prior to initiation of any mosquito control work. Should the local mosquito control district not propose any mosquito control operations on the property, no arthropod control plan is required. See Exhibit T.

F. Use of Private Land Contractors

The forest manager makes ongoing evaluations of the use of private contractors and consultants to facilitate the total resource management activities of this state forest. The opportunities for outsourcing land management work include:

1. Herbicide applications
2. Restoration activities
3. Site preparation activities
4. Reforestation
5. Timber harvesting
6. Biological assessments and mapping
7. Fixed capital and infrastructure improvements

VII. Proposed Management Activities for Natural Communities

In 2021, FNAI completed an inventory and natural community mapping project on KBSF. Current and historic natural community cover types can be found in Exhibits O and P, and Table 6. This inventory included altered community types which are habitats that have been impacted by humans and do not fit into FNAI's Natural Community Classification. See Table 7.

Table 6. Natural Landcover Types

Community Type	Historic Acres*	Current Acres*
Depression Marsh	245	243
Dry Prairie	756	708
Mesic Hammock	46	46
Slough Marsh	581	559
Wet Prairie	364	342
Altered Landcover Types**	0	94
TOTAL	1,992	1,992

* Rounding errors exist

** See Table 7

Table 7. Altered Landcover Types

Landcover Type	Current Acres*
Abandoned Field/Pasture	7
Artificial Pond	0.5
Canal/Ditch	16
Clearing	24.5
Road	8
Successional Hardwood Forest	38
TOTAL	94

* Protocol as described in Appendix 2 of FNAI's "Guide to the Natural Communities of Florida", 2010 Edition.

For the purposes of this management plan, restoration is defined as the process of returning ecosystems to the appropriate structure and species composition, based on soil type, representative species present, and hydrology. Management during this ten-year period will begin with a forest-wide assessment of the fuel loading, timber densities, reforestation needs, and groundcover in order to develop a five-year comprehensive operational plan for prescribed burning and other management activities across KBSF. Strategies may include thinning pine plantations, mowing or chopping in areas of heavy fuel buildup, application of both dormant and growing season fires, and / or the use of herbicides to control hardwoods and / or hardwood regeneration, where appropriate. Site preparation and reforestation may be required to increase pine stocking in stands with very poor stocking or in restoration efforts on any future pine-dominant parcels. Fire return intervals are included as a guide and may vary depending upon specific conditions and are intended to attain desired forest and resource management goals. See Table 8.

Table 8. Prescribed Fire Interval Guide on KBSF

Habitat Type	Historic Fire Return Intervals*	KBSF Fire Frequency Goal (Local)	Comments
Depression marsh	1-8	1-8	Burn edges with surrounding uplands
Dry Prairie	1-3	1-3	
Mesic Hammock	N/A	N/A	
Slough Marsh	N/A	1-3	Burn edges with surrounding uplands
Wet Prairie	1-3	1-3	

* As determined by FNAI

The following community descriptions, existing condition descriptions, and management recommendations are taken from a 2021 FNAI mapping project report and the Guide to the Natural Communities of Florida (FNAI 2010), as well as from the knowledge and experience gained by FFS during forest inventory efforts and routine field work on KBSF.

To achieve the objectives outlined in this plan, the following management activities will be performed in the natural and managed communities at KBSF during the next ten-year planning period. Goals, desired conditions, standards, and guidelines provide management area direction. These goals and desired conditions may take many planning cycles to attain.

A. Depression Marsh

Description:

Depression marshes are isolated, non-forested wetland basins embedded in a pyrogenic matrix community such as pine flatwoods, prairie, or sandhill. These marshes typically have concentric zones of vegetation related to the length of hydroperiod and depth of flooding. Depression marshes are distinguished from basin marshes principally by their landscape position which subjects them to more frequent fires. The desired future condition for a depression marsh is a diverse herb dominated community where grasses, sedges, and emergent broadleaf herbs such as maidencane (*Panicum hemitomon*), narrowfruit horned beaksedge (*Rhynchospora inundata*), and pickerelweed (*Pontederia cordata*) dominate. Shrub cover is typically very low, restricted mainly to St. John's wort (*Hypericum* sp.), and palm or oak trees are found only on the edges. Depression marshes at KBSF are common, occupying the lowest elevations in the flat, prairie landscape. On 1940s aerial photographs, depression marshes appear as darker smooth circular patches set into the dry prairie landscape, usually with a border of wet prairie vegetation. The boundary between depression marshes and the shorter hydroperiod wet prairies is difficult to determine in most cases. Marshes and prairies at KBSF are on a firm, sandy substrate, with peat accumulation only at the deepest centers.

Current Conditions:

Most depression marshes at KBSF are relatively undisturbed. Off-road vehicle trails cross the marshes along the property boundary, but these are mostly restricted to the shallow marsh edge or fringing wet prairie. Hydrology alteration by ditching and road construction also affects a few marshes in the central part of the property. Species composition varies from the outer, shallow portions typically on sand to the inner, deep centers with peat accumulation. The outer zones are mostly dominated by blue maidencane (*Amphicarpum muehlenbergianum*), longleaf threeawn (*Aristida palustris*), southern umbrellasedge (*Fuirena scirpoidea*), and Tracy's beaksedge (*Rhynchospora tracyi*), with an open shrub layer of peelbark St. John's wort (*Hypericum fasciculatum*). This zone is also characterized by a high diversity of wetland herbs, grasses, and sedges. The transition to the center often has dense narrowfruit, horned beaksedge and/or maidencane, while flag species such as pickerelweed and bulltongue arrowhead (*Sagittaria lancifolia*) dominate the central areas.

Conversion to roads, ditches, or cleared fence lines has slightly reduced the acreage of depression marshes on the property. Hog digging is a minor problem in the shallower areas.

Fire Regimes:

Depression marshes likely burned irregularly every 1 to 8 years depending on water levels at the time of fires on the landscape. Fires generally occurred early (April-June) in the lightning season when water was low and surrounding communities were dry.

Management Needs:

Marshes should generally be allowed to burn with the surrounding prairie communities. Ideally, fire should be prescribed at a time when water is low or absent in the marshes. Ditches or elevated roads through marshes can be at greater risk of invasion by invasive plants and destructive hogs. Continued monitoring for new populations of nuisance species can identify problem areas early.

B. Dry Prairie

Description:

Dry prairie is a community of low shrubs and grasses occupying vast, level expanses in south-central Florida. The community is entirely or nearly treeless, with stunted shrubs no more than knee-high. Common shrubs are saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*), which is often stunted, dwarf live oak (*Quercus minima*), gallberry (*Ilex glabra*), shiny blueberry (*Vaccinium myrsinites*), netted pawpaw (*Asimina reticulata*), Atlantic St. John's wort (*Hypericum tenuifolium*), wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*), and dwarf huckleberry (*Gaylussacia dumosa*). The groundcover includes about an equal proportion of herbs that form a dense, diverse layer of predominantly wiregrass (*Aristida stricta*), along with bottlebrush threeawn (*Aristida spiciformis*), hemlock witchgrass (*Dichanthelium portoricense*), broomsedge bluestem (*Andropogon virginicus*), lopsided indiagrass (*Sorghastrum secundum*), and cypress witchgrass (*Dichanthelium ensifolium*), plus numerous forbs.

Almost all uplands on KBSF were historically dry prairie. These appear on 1940s aerial photographs as a smooth, medium grey signature, occasionally with darker circular areas with larger saw palmetto clones. The dry prairies form a mosaic with wet prairies throughout, with a few small areas of hammock in natural fire shadows along wetland edges.

Current Conditions:

Dry prairie at KBSF is generally in good condition. Although there was a lack of fire in the years immediately preceding acquisition by the state, the landscape was burned as part of rangeland management prior to that. Prairies on the northern portion of the property are in the best condition. These are similar to desired future conditions and only require continued fire to maintain quality. In addition to a variety of dwarf shrubs, these prairies have a good diversity of herbs including bluestem (*Andropogon* sp.), wiregrass, pineland chaffhead (*Carphephorus carnosus*), coastalplain chaffhead (*Carphephorus corymbosus*), spadeleaf (*Centella asiatica*), cypress witchgrass, Baldwin's spikerush (*Eleocharis baldwinii*), early whitetop fleabane (*Erigeron vernus*), Mohr's thoroughwort (*Eupatorium mohrii*), roundleaf thoroughwort (*Eupatorium rotundifolium*), slender flattop goldenrod (*Euthamia caroliniana*), fimbry (*Fimbristylis* sp.), narrowleaf sunflower (*Helianthus angustifolius*), fringed yellow stargrass (*Hypoxis juncea*), blazing star (*Liatris* sp.), savannah false pimpernel (*Lindernia grandiflora*), rose rush (*Lygodesmia aphylla*), whitetop aster (*Oclemena reticulata*), thin paspalum (*Paspalum setaceum*), Florida false sunflower (*Phoebanthus grandiflorus*), yellow milkwort (*Polygala rugelii*), coastalplain milkwort (*Polygala setacea*), bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*), blackroot (*Pterocaulon pycnostachyum*), Nuttall's meadowbeauty (*Rhexia nuttallii*), whitetop aster (*Sericocarpus tortifolius*), sweet goldenrod (*Solidago odora*), rough hedgehyssop (*Sophronanthe hispida*), and yellow hatpins (*Syngonanthus flavidulus*).

Prairies on the southern portion of the property have not burned recently and have an overgrowth of gallberry, coastalplain staggerbush (*Lyonia fruticosa*), and southern bayberry (*Morella cerifera*) that are attaining heights over 2 meters in some places.

Mesic hammock vegetation has expanded into a few former prairies due to a lack of fire, and these successional hardwood forests now occupy some ecotones between dry and wet prairies. Although some dry prairie elements remain, these forests have an open to closed canopy of live

oak (*Quercus virginiana*) and cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*). The groundcover is often weedy with big carpetgrass (*Axonopus furcatus*), flatsedge (*Cyperus* sp.), fireweed (*Erechtites hieracifolius*), and common wireweed (*Sida ulmifolia*), possibly as a result of past cattle grazing and clearing. Vines are fairly common and include peppervine (*Ampelopsis arborea*), saw greenbrier (*Smilax bona-nox*), eastern poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*), and muscadine (*Vitis rotundifolia*).

There has been some limited conversion of dry prairie to cleared fencelines and roads with associated ditches, and there is one approximately 7-acre abandoned pasture located in the southern half of the property. This pasture was planted in bahiagrass (*Paspalum notatum*), but now has a variety of mostly native plants re-colonizing it. However, the invasive cogon grass (*Imperata cylindrica*) is also exploiting this disturbed area.

Fire Regimes:

Frequent fire is critical for maintaining the dry prairie landscape. A fire return interval of 1 to 3 years will limit the growth of woody plants and promote a diverse herbaceous groundcover.

Management Needs:

Management in dry prairie should focus on frequent prescribed burns to maintain the unique stature and diversity of this community. Fires should be allowed to enter hammock edges to limit the spread of hammock vegetation into adjacent prairies. Ground disturbances from firebreaks and roller chopping should be kept to a minimum to discourage the spread of native and non-native weedy and invasive species that can be costly to remove. Existing populations of cogon grass and other invasive species need to be treated and surveyed regularly to prevent further spread.

C. Mesic Hammock

Description:

Mesic hammocks are evergreen, closed-canopy forests of primarily live oak and cabbage palm. These hammocks usually occur along wetlands or as islands within wetlands where they are sheltered from fire. The shrubby understory may be dense or open, tall or short, and is typically composed of a mix of saw palmetto, American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*), gallberry, common persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*), wild olive (*Osmanthus americanus*), and / or wax myrtle. Tropical shrubs such as myrsine (*Myrsine cubana*) and wild coffee (*Psychotria nervosa*) are common. The herb layer is often sparse or patchy and consists of various graminoids. Abundant epiphytes on live oaks and cabbage palms are a characteristic feature of mesic hammocks. These include Spanish moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*) and other air-plants (*Tillandsia* sp.), epiphytic ferns such as resurrection fern (*Pleopeltis polypodioides* var. *michauxiana*), golden polypody (*Phlebodium aureum*), and shoestring fern (*Vittaria lineata*).

KBSF has several small mesic hammocks fringing the large marshes on the property. These range from less than an acre to almost 8 acres in size. On 1940s aerial photographs, these hammocks have a darker, textured signature.

Current Conditions:

Mesic hammocks on KBSF are generally in good condition. The canopy is dominated by either sabal palm or live oak, occasionally with swamp laurel oak (*Quercus laurifolia*). The open shrub layers contain mostly sabal palm, but also American beautyberry, coralbean (*Erythrina herbacea*), St. Andrew's cross (*Hypericum hypericoides*), and saw palmetto. There is a diversity of herbs, including blue mistflower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*), witchgrass (*Dichanthelium* sp.), fireweed, toothpetal false rein orchid (*Habenaria floribunda*), creeping cucumber (*Melothria pendula*), sword fern (*Nephrolepis* sp.), monk orchid (*Oeceoclades maculata*), woodsgrass (*Oplismenus hirtellus*), sweetscent (*Pluchea odorata*), rougeplant (*Rivina humilis*), common wireweed, toothed midsorus fern (*Telmatoblechnum serrulatum*), and white crownbeard (*Verbesina virginica*). Airplants and epiphytic ferns are abundant.

Fire Regimes:

Fire is generally infrequent in mesic hammock, but mature live oaks and cabbage palms are tolerant of low intensity burns.

Management Needs:

Management in mesic hammocks should be focused on removal of invasive species. Typical prescribed burns in the adjacent ecosystem should naturally extinguish along the hammock edge. Firebreaks should be discouraged to allow a development of a natural ecotone and to help minimize invasion by weedy or invasive species.

D. Slough Marsh**Description:**

Slough marsh is a primarily herbaceous community growing in a narrow to broad shallow channel with intermittently flowing water in flat sandy landscapes. These marshes are frequently flooded with slow moving water from upstream sources and local rainfall and are mostly found in the dry prairie regions of south-central Florida, where freshwater marshes may form linear drainageways that provide a conduit for moving water. Grasses, sedges, and emergent herbs dominate the mainly treeless landscape. Vegetation is found in zones based on length of hydroperiod and depth of flooding. Frequently flooded areas of slough marsh are often dominated by species such as bulltongue arrowhead, pickerelweed, alligatorflag (*Thalia geniculata*), maidencane, sawgrass (*Cladium jamaicense*), and cattails (*Typha* sp.). Drier marsh zones with less peat accumulation often are dominated by sand cordgrass (*Spartina bakeri*), longleaf threeawn, beaksedges (*Rhynchospora* spp.), Elliott's yellow-eyed grass (*Xyris elliotii*), narrowfruit horned beaksedge, and blue maidencane (*Amphicarpum muhlenbergianum*). Woody species are generally low in cover and include peelbark St. John's wort and water toothleaf (*Stillingia aquatica*).

KBSF has a large slough marsh that runs through the eastern and southern portions of the property. This marsh appears as a medium gray, smooth signature on the 1940s aerial photographs, with lighter colored areas of wet prairie forming broad ecotones to dry prairies.

Current Conditions:

The slough marsh on KBSF is generally in good condition but impacted by a central ditch running most of the length of the slough. As a result, water level fluctuations are likely not as

large as the historic condition. The slough marsh occupies a fairly solid sand substrate and is shallow throughout most of the marsh. The distinction with the wet prairie ecotone is difficult to determine.

There is a uniform, open cover of short peelbark St. John's wort and water toothleaf, with occasional southern bayberry. Grasses dominate the vegetation with longleaf threeawn, blue maidencane, spadeleaf, pink sundew (*Drosera capillaris*), pipewort (*Eriocaulon* sp.), pineland heliotrope (*Euploca polyphylla*), rosy camphorweed (*Pluchea baccharis*), Baldwin's milkwort (*Polygala balduinii*), tall pinebarren milkwort (*Polygala cymosa*), threadleaf beaksedge (*Rhynchospora filifolia*), largeflower rosegentian (*Sabatia grandiflora*), nutrush (*Scleria* sp.), water toothleaf, coastalplain yellow-eyed grass (*Xyris ambigua*), and Elliott's yellow-eyed grass. An elevated road and associated ditches bisect the slough marsh in three areas, and a cleared fenceline also impacts some portions of the marsh. The invasive West Indian marsh grass (*Hymenachne amplexicaule*) is exploiting this disturbance and could potentially expand into the surrounding marsh.

Fire Regimes:

As in other wetland communities, the frequency of fire in slough marshes is a function of the fire frequency in the surrounding matrix community, as well as the fire-carrying characteristics of the marsh vegetation itself. Fire is usually beneficial, limiting the growth of woody species. Several dominant herbaceous plants, particularly maidencane and bulltongue arrowhead, grow vigorously following fire under normal conditions, i.e., when water levels are still near the soil surface.

Management Needs:

Management efforts should focus on invasive plant removal to reduce the threat of West Indian marsh grass expansion. Where practical, hydrological restoration activities which create a more natural hydroperiod should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Prescribed fire from the surrounding prairie landscape should be allowed to burn across the marsh.

E. Wet Prairie

Description:

Wet prairies are herbaceous, short hydroperiod, wetland communities that occur on topographically flat areas. These situations may occur in low areas in pine flatwoods or dry prairies, or in ecotones between marshes and the surrounding uplands. There is typically no canopy or shrub layer. The herbaceous layer is often dominated by wiregrass or hairawn muhly (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*), and a diversity of other grasses, sedges, and forbs.

At KBSF, wet prairies occupy large areas, usually adjacent to depression or slough marshes, although many small prairies are interspersed throughout the dry prairie. These wet prairies are a light grey, smooth signature on the 1940s aerial photography. The very flat topography on the property makes the exact boundary between marsh and prairie very difficult to determine.

Current Conditions:

The wet prairies at KBSF are generally in good condition. They range from wetter prairies grading into high marsh dominated by blue maidencane, big carpetgrass, hairawn muhly, or sand

cordgrass, to more typical wiregrass-dominated prairies with a diversity of species including pineland chaffhead, pineland daisy (*Chaptalia tomentosa*), toothache grass (*Ctenium aromaticum*), pipewort, Mohr's thoroughwort, narrowleaf sunflower, clustered bushmint (*Hyptis alata*), grassleaf Barbara's buttons (*Marshallia graminifolia*), drumheads (*Polygala cruciata*), beaksedges, largeflower rosegentian, and yellow hatpins.

Many of the smaller prairies embedded in the dry prairie matrix are quite dry and seem more like an intermediate community between the two. These have a substantial cover of dwarf live oak but lack most of the other dwarf shrub species typical of dry prairie.

There has been some conversion of wet prairie to roads and ditches, and fire exclusion, particularly in the southern portion of the property, has led to an increase in tall shrubs. Wet prairies that fringe the large slough marsh on the property have also been impacted by lower water levels from ditching that has allowed the expansion of hammock trees into formerly open areas.

Fire Regimes:

Wet prairie naturally burns on a frequency similar to that of dry prairie. The fine fuels that dominate this community are highly flammable and carry fire quickly across the landscape.

Management Needs:

Management goals for the wet prairies of KBSF should focus on maintaining the existing high-quality areas through frequent prescribed fires. Any hydrological restoration determined to be practical and implemented within the slough marsh community would benefit wet prairie. Feral hog removal is also needed to reduce soil disturbance.

F. Altered Landcover Types

Description:

Altered landcover types are areas where the natural community has been overwhelmingly altered as a result of human activity.

The altered landcover types described in this section are often not appropriate areas for restoration. If restoration is desired, the target future condition of the altered community is dependent on the historic community. Please refer to the appropriate community type for a more specific explanation of the desired future condition.

Current Conditions:

KBSF is in mostly natural condition with a few exceptions. Cleared fencelines (classified as “clearing” in this map) and elevated roads with associated ditches run through the site. The ditches and clearings are generally populated with native, weedy species, but also harbor non-native invasive plants that can be transported on vehicles and machinery. West Indian marsh grass, an aggressive invasive grass in wetlands, was observed in two roadside ditch locations. And along the southern fenceline, cogon grass, candlestick plant (*Senna alata*), and Caesar’s weed (*Urena lobata*) were found.

A wide, shallow ditch runs the length of the slough marsh and creates excessive drainage in the system. This ditch does not currently appear to have extensive invasive species infestations but

should be observed for West Indian marsh grass.

There are several small clearings on the site, often with a weedy understory and young hammock species forming a broken canopy. The largest cleared area is just off the main road running south. This is an old, approximately 7-acre pasture, abandoned since cattle operations ceased. Historically, this was a dry prairie adjacent to the slough marsh. This pasture is planted in bahiagrass but now has a variety of mostly native plants re-colonizing it. However, the invasive cogon grass is also exploiting the edges of this disturbed area.

Hydrology alterations and a lack of fire in the landscape has driven the expansion of hardwood hammock species into areas of former dry and wet prairie, particularly on the southern portion of the property. These successional hardwood forests now occupy about 38 acres of ecotones, often as an extension of the smaller areas of natural hammock. Although some dry prairie elements remain, these forests have an open to closed canopy of live oak and cabbage palm. The groundcover is often weedy with big carpetgrass, flatsedge, fireweed, and common wireweed, possibly as a result of past cattle grazing and clearing. Vines are fairly common and include peppervine, saw greenbrier, eastern poison ivy, and muscadine.

Fire Regimes:

Please refer to the appropriate historical community type.

Management Needs:

It may not be practical or desirable to restore some of the altered landcover types (e.g., roads) to the historic natural community. However, long term hydrology restoration that includes the removal or plugging of ditches through the slough marsh would be highly beneficial to the natural communities on the site if determined to be feasible and practical.

An increase in fire frequency will help to limit further spread of hammock vegetation. Restoration of the abandoned pasture to dry prairie would require frequent burns and possibly planting native groundcover species if determined to be practical.

VIII. References

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IX. Glossary of Abbreviations

ARC.....	Acquisition and Restoration Council
BMAP.....	Basin Management Action Plan
BMP.....	Best Management Practices
F.A.C.	Florida Administrative Code
FDACS	Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
FDEP	Florida Department of Environmental Protection
DHR.....	Florida Division of Historical Resources
FFS	Florida Forest Service
FNAI.....	Florida Natural Areas Inventory
F.S.....	Florida Statutes
FWC	Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
KBSF	Kissimmee Bend State Forest
NRCS.....	Natural Resources Conservation Service
NWR.....	National Wildlife Refuge
SFWMD	South Florida Water Management District
OALE	FDACS Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement
OFW	Outstanding Florida Waters
OPS.....	Other Personal Services Employment
TIITF	Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund