

STATE FOREST SPOTLIGHT

Sustainable Forestry Initiative®

The Florida Forest Service voluntarily participates in the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) program. The Sustainable Forestry Initiative program integrates the perpetual growing and harvesting of trees with the protection of wildlife, plants, soils, and water.

Blackwater River State Forest is certified to the SFI forest management standards. We are proud to be part of a growing community of landowners, conservation groups and responsible companies all working towards improving forest management.



Love the state forests? So do we!

The Friends of Florida State Forests is a direct-support organization of the Florida Forest Service dedicated to ensuring Florida's State Forests are available for future generations to enjoy. Make a difference by joining today to help protect Florida's State Forests.

Membership dues go to the forests for conservation and improvement projects. To join Friends of Florida State Forests or for more information, visit:

www.FloridaStateForests.org



Things to Know When Visiting Florida's State Forests

Blackwater River State Forest is the largest state forest in Florida, with over 211,000 acres of woodlands, lakes, and streams. It is named for the Blackwater River, which begins in neighboring Conecuh County, Alabama, and meanders southwestward through the forest into Blackwater Bay near Bagdad, Florida. The forest has campgrounds, day-use areas and recreational trails for your enjoyment. Some of the more important rules and information when entering the forest include:

- Visitors will be required to pay a use fee for day-use activities, where posted. Day use or annual passes are available in the webstore at FloridaStateForests.ReserveAmerica.com.
- Reservations for all campsites can be made by calling 877.879.3859 or go to www.FloridaStateForests.ReserveAmerica.com.
- Swim at your own risk. Children must be under the watch of their adult guardian when swimming. Life vests save lives.
- Hunting and fishing in state forests are regulated by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC). It is suggested that non-hunters wear bright clothing in the forest during the main hunting season from October through March.
- Use caution when driving on dirt roads. The speed limit on all roads within the forest is 30 mph unless posted otherwise. Clay roads, in particular, can be very slippery after a rain.
- Drive only on roads designated with officially numbered or named road posts or signs.
- For safety reasons, glass containers are not allowed around state forest waterways.
- Pets, unless posted as a no pet zone, must be restrained on a leash.
- Do not cut or remove trees and vegetation.
- Campfires must not be left unattended.

For more information, visit:

www.FDACS.gov/FLStateForests

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Florida Forest Service

Blackwater River State Forest



Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Commissioner Wilton Simpson

History

Spanish and other early pioneer explorations of the Blackwater area included an expedition by General Andrew Jackson. The Blackwater River State Forest was rich with vast, huge longleaf pine. During the mid 1800's, longleaf pine products became valuable to the economy of Florida's panhandle. In Blackwater, logs were floated down the creek systems to sawmills in Bagdad. Later, wood was brought out of the forest by railcar as is evident by the old railroad beds that run through the forest. Large pine mills such as the Bagdad Land and Lumber Company and the Bay Point Mill Company together processed billions of board feet of timber from the forest and surrounding areas.

In 1938, the U.S. Department of Agriculture entered into a long-term lease with the Florida Board of Forestry to reforest and manage the forest. In 1955, the property was deeded over to the state of Florida.

Forestry

Management practices on Blackwater River State Forest are important to the restoration and maintenance of forest ecosystems and provide economic benefits to the local economy. To convert areas back to native longleaf pine forests, undesirable species are reduced and removed. Millions of exotic plants that impact the native ecosystems are being removed.

To further return the forest to the fire-tolerant, longleaf pine system, an aggressive prescribed burning program is in place. Even after two devastating hurricanes, Opal (1995) and Ivan (2004), the forest is home to millions of healthy longleaf pine saplings that have naturally regenerated due to an open forest floor thanks to prescribed burning. As fire continues to play a pivotal role in forest management, the longleaf-wiregrass ecosystem will continue to flourish and supply homes for many threatened species.



Grist mill at Krul Lake Recreation Area



Pitcher plants



North Hurricane Lake and campground

For more information contact:
Blackwater River State Forest
11650 Munson Highway, Milton, FL 32570
(850)-957-5700
www.FDACS.gov/FLStateForests

Natural Resources

Blackwater River State Forest is home to over 211,000 acres of rolling clay hills of primarily upland longleaf pine forest; alluvial hardwood forests of slash pine and Atlantic white cedar; longleaf-turkey oak sandhill; and sand-bottom, black water streams. With the adjacent federal landholdings of Conecuh National Forest, to the north, and Eglin Air Force Base, to the south, the western panhandle region is the largest contiguous ecological community of the longleaf pine - wiregrass ecosystem in the world. Less than 3 million of the original 60 million acres of this ecosystem remains. Recognized species like the gopher tortoise, eastern indigo snake, panhandle lily, white-top pitcher plant, and the red-cockaded woodpecker have declined significantly from their pre-colonial numbers. Many of these threatened species are thriving in a healthy, native habitat on Blackwater River State Forest. Breeding pairs of red-cockaded woodpeckers have increased tenfold since 1998 due to an active habitat restoration program.

Recreation

Blackwater River State Forest has outstanding forest and water resources that offer a variety of recreational opportunities such as hiking, canoeing, birding, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, off-highway vehicle riding, and mountain biking. There are ten developed recreation areas located throughout the forest. Many of these facilities have campsites with electricity, water and showers. There are three freshwater lakes that serve as the focal point for freshwater fishing and camping. Two of the lakes are swimming areas with picnic tables, grills, and swimming docks; and one is an equestrian campground that offers 69 miles of horse trails. There are also group primitive areas for camping. The forest has many hiking trails that range in size from just over one mile to 54 miles in length. Blackwater River State Forest also offers many driving opportunities to travel down quiet forest roads to view beautiful longleaf pine forests and clean refreshing streams.