

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.

John M. Bethea 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 forests.

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

www.FloridaStateForests.org



Things to Know When Visiting John M. Bethea State

- Day use is allowed 1 ½ hours before sunrise to 1 ½ hours after sunset.
- Plants and non-seasonal game animals are protected. Please do not remove or destroy these natural resources.
- No rope swings or diving from river banks or trees.
- Drive on designated roads only. Do not obstruct roads, gates or fire lines.
- Speed limit on all roads within the forest is 30 mph, unless posted otherwise.
- A special use authorization is required for hunt camp sites.
- Maple Set Campground sites are by reservation only through FloridaStateForests.ReserveAmerica.com or by calling 877-879-3859/ TDD 800-373-3851.
- Hunting requires a permit and license. We encourage all visitors to check the Wildlife Management Area regulations and season dates before visiting the forest at www.MyFWC.com

For more information, visit:

www.FDACS.gov/FLStateForests

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Florida Forest Service

John M. Bethea State Forest



Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Commissioner Wilton Simpson

History

The Florida Forest Service acquired John M. Bethea State Forest in 2001. This state forest is named in honor of John M. Bethea, a former State Forester for more than 17 years. Bethea attended the University of Florida and in 1941 received a Bachelor of Science from the School of Forest Resources and Conservation. Additionally Bethea was involved in a number of organizations such as the National Wildfire Coordinating Group, the Florida Forestry Association and was inducted in the Society of American Foresters Hall of Fame.

Past historical usage of this forestland included timber production, naval stores and cattle grazing operations. Since state acquisition, John M. Bethea State Forest has suffered catastrophic wildfires which have impacted more than 80 percent of the state forest. In order to address the impacts to the state forest from previous wildfires and to mitigate damage from future wildfires, forestry staff have replanted over 7,000 acres with longleaf pine to create a more wildfire resilient landscape. Over time the state forest will recover and continue to fill our resource, environmental and recreational needs.

Forestry

Utilizing the latest timber management practices is an important component of the overall forest management of John M. Bethea State Forest. A continued sustained flow of forest products is an integral component of the restoration activities. Timber harvesting and other silvicultural activities follow the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services guide to Silviculture Best Management Practices.

Prescribed burning is one of the most important and cost-effective forest management tools used on John M. Bethea State Forest. It not only helps protect this forest from future devastating wildfires but also creates improved wildlife habitat and healthy ecosystems. Prescribed burning is extremely beneficial for bringing newly planted longleaf pines out of the "grass stage", thus rendering them to grow faster and also to be more resistant to disease and insects.



Reforested area



Prescribed burn



Equestrians along a forest road

For more information contact:
John M. Bethea State Forest
11656 S.R. 2 Sanderson, FL 32087
(904)259-4688
www.FDACS.gov/FLStateForests

Natural Resources

This 37,736 acre forest is located in the northern part of Baker County near the Georgia State line. Based on available historical information and also the Florida Natural Areas Inventory, the primary natural forest community on the state forest is mesic flatwoods.

Prior to State ownership the majority of this forestland was managed for timber production creating some alteration of natural forest communities. However some of the historical natural forest communities such as basin swamp, dome swamp, wet flatwoods and bottomland forest remain intact.

Forest management practices utilized by the Florida Forest Service at the John M. Bethea State Forest will focus on restoring all altered sites back to known historical status and also managing the natural resources under a multiple use concept.

Recreation

John M. Bethea State Forest is open daily for visitors to enjoy picnicking, camping, hiking, fishing, canoeing and horseback riding.

John M. Bethea State Forest is home to two trails. The Taylor Horse Trail is 7.5 miles and loops around Ellis Bay. The Maple Set Hiking Trail is 2.5 miles and parallels the St. Mary's River.

Small ponds are scattered throughout John M. Bethea State Forest providing enjoyable fishing areas in addition to the St. Mary's River.

John M. Bethea State Forest is open to regulated hunting and fishing under the direction of the Florida Forest Service and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and is managed as part of the Osceola Wildlife Management Area.