

STATE FOREST SPOTLIGHT

Vital Wildlife Corridor

Together with other adjacent public and private lands, the forest provides a vital wildlife corridor between the Wekiva Basin and the Ocala National Forest. This corridor has a rich abundance of wildlife including the commonly sighted Florida black bear. The state forest provides habitat for one of the largest populations of the threatened Florida Scrub-jay on any state owned land and is one of the few areas with a stable population. The Florida Scrub-jay is the only bird species found exclusively in Florida and can be seen in several core areas across the forest.

At least 19 named springs, associated spring runs and streams meander through the forest before joining Blackwater Creek. The Wekiva River together with Blackwater Creek and two other spring runs have been designated as a National Wild and Scenic River.

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 Seminole State Forest

- Day use is from sunrise to sunset.
- Swimming is not allowed; drone use is prohibited; and removal or damage of plants or artifacts is prohibited.
- Pets must be on a leash.
- Do not obstruct gates, roads, or firelines.
- Bicycles, including e-bikes without a throttle (Class 1), and registered motor vehicles are allowed on designated open named roads only.
- Unlicensed vehicles, motorcycles and ATVs (all-terrain vehicles) are not allowed on the forest.
- Foot traffic and horses are welcome on trails designated for their use.
- Do not make new roads or trails.
- Hunting requires a permit and license and is allowed in designated areas during appropriate seasons.
- Use available garbage receptacles or take all garbage with you when you leave.
- Three primitive camp zones are available for thru hikers on the Florida Trail. For primitive campsites requiring a reservation, visit FloridaStateForests.ReserveAmerica.com or call (877) 879-3859
- Drive-in access requires a State Forest Use Permit. For information and permits, contact the Seminole State Forest Visitor Center at (352) 589-1762.
- Visitors are required to pay entrance or recreation use fees in designated areas. Payment for the Florida State Forest Day Use Fee and Annual Pass is available on the Web Store at FloridaStateForests.ReserveAmerica.com.
- We encourage all visitors to check the Wildlife Management Area regulations and hunting season dates before visiting the forest. For further information visit: www.MyFWC.com.

DACS-P-00171 Rev. 2-2025



Florida Forest Service Seminole State Forest



Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Commissioner Wilton Simpson

History

The majority of the 30,211 acre Seminole State Forest was purchased as part of the Wekiva-Ocala Greenway Project. The first of over 100 individual parcels that comprise the forest was acquired beginning in 1990.

In the late 1800s, many of the floodplain swamps and hydric hammocks on the forest were logged. The cypress was cut and the forests were re-entered for the remaining hardwoods. Portions of a railroad tramway that was used for transporting cut logs and equipment still exists within these areas. Upland pine harvesting occurred on the majority of the parcels without consideration for future management of pine timber. Pine stumps with turpentine “cat-faces” and clay pots have been located, indicating naval stores were active on portions of the forest in the past. Remnants of a small sawmill were discovered south of Black Water Creek. Cattle operations were active on many of the areas prior to acquisition. Organized hunting for white-tailed deer and other wildlife has been ongoing for decades throughout the forest and hunt camps were established on several of the parcels.

Forestry

The Florida Forest Service’s mission is to protect and manage the forest resources of Florida, ensuring that they are available for future generations. The Florida Forest Service manages more than 1 million acres of state forests for multiple public uses including timber, recreation and wildlife habitat. The majority of the sand pine scrub on Seminole State Forest was over mature when it was purchased. Restoration activities in the scrub have been ongoing to benefit species such as the Florida Scrub-jay and other scrub endemics. These activities involve reducing the sand pine and hardwood overstory to allow the reintroduction of prescribed fire.

Sustainable timber management involves timber harvesting, removing off-site pine species and reforestation. Prescribed fire is used in all fire dependent plant communities to enhance wildlife and listed species habitat, reduce the buildup of fuels and to restore, maintain, and protect ecological processes.



Black Water Spring



Florida black bear in tree



Kayaking Black Water Creek

For more information contact:
Seminole State Forest
28500 SR44 Eustis, FL 32736
(352)589-1762
www.FDACS.gov/FLStateForests

Natural Resources

The distinctive character of Seminole State Forest is its ecological diversity, which includes almost all of the naturally occurring vegetative communities found in Central Florida. There are at least 18 different natural communities on the forest, each with unique plants, animals and physical characteristics. A few examples are flatwoods, scrub, blackwater streams and bottomland forests. The forest contains over 5,000 acres of scrub and scrubby flatwoods, a rapidly disappearing biological community found predominately in Florida.

Seminole State Forest’s natural communities help preserve some of Florida’s rare and endangered plants and animals, including the Florida Scrub-Jay, Florida black bear, gopher tortoise, gopher frog, striped newt, Florida pine snake, eastern indigo snake, Florida hasterola, scrub bay and scrub holly. The forest also is a wintering area for many migratory bird species, including the Peregrine Falcon. Numerous depressional marshes provide breeding grounds for gopher frogs and striped newts as well as habitat for Piedmont joint-grass and Florida three-awned grass.

Recreation

Seminole State Forest is open for visitors to enjoy picnicking, hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, canoeing/kayaking, fishing, wildlife viewing, hunting and camping. Daylight access to the trails is available at two trailheads: Bear Pond and Cassia. A State Forest Use Permit can be obtained from the Seminole State Forest Visitor Center for day use vehicle access beyond the trailheads.

Overnight primitive camping is allowed at eight reservation sites, three of which are hike-in only. Overnight parking at the trailheads requires reservation camping confirmation. For camping information and reservations, visit FloridaStateForests.ReserveAmerica.com or call (877) 879-3859.

The majority of the forest is a Wildlife Management Area managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission in cooperation with the Florida Forest Service. A hunting permit and no-cost quota permit are required for all hunts except small game.