

STATE FOREST SPOTLIGHT

Pristine Slough

The Okaloacoochee Slough, the forest's namesake, is a 15,746-acre pristine slough marsh that is oriented north-south through the forest. The natural systems of the Fakahatchee Strand and Big Cypress Preserve are dependent on the water supplied by the Okaloacoochee Slough.

The Okaloacoochee Slough is one of the few places in south Florida in which the historic natural landscape, north of the Everglades or Big Cypress National Preserve, can be observed. The Okaloacoochee Slough provides an essential role on the landscape in regards to water quality protection, ground water recharge, flood control, and aquatic habitat preservation.

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 Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest

- Plants and animals are protected. Please do not remove or destroy these natural resources.
- Drive on designated roads only.
- Please take all garbage with you when you leave the forest.
- Off-highway vehicles (OHVs), motorized boats, and unlicensed vehicles are not allowed on the forest.
- Visitors may be required to pay entrance or recreation use fees in designated areas. Annual Day Use Entrance Passes are available.
- Reservations for all campsites can be made by calling 877.879.3859 or go to <https://www.FloridaStateForests.ReserveAmerica.com>
- Hunting requires a permit and license and is allowed in designated areas during appropriate seasons.
- 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.

For more information, visit:

www.FDACS.gov/FLStateForests

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Florida Forest Service

Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND CONSUMER SERVICES



History

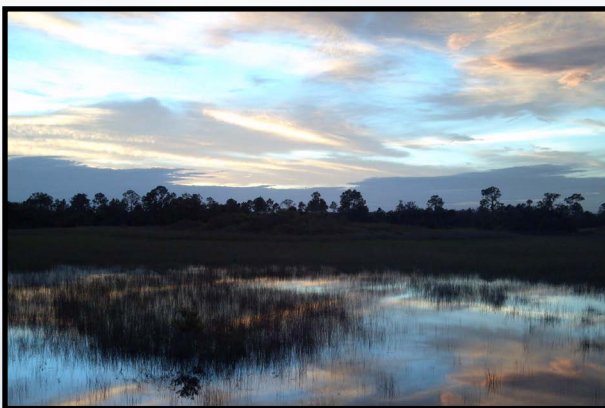
Native American history, logging, rail transport, farming, hunting, and cattle grazing all make up the historical character of Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest. The area of Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest was heavily logged in the early 1900s. Local timber was ideal for making railroad crossties to supply a growing railroad system in southern Florida. Evidence of logging operations on Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest can be observed near Twin Mills Grade where the Atlantic Land Improvement Company (ALICO) operated two portable sawmills. Although the two sawmills no longer exist on the forest, remnant sawdust piles can be found.

The Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest was purchased with Conservation and Recreation Lands, Save Our Rivers, and Preservation 2000 acquisition funds.

Forestry

Forest management practices on Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest follow a multiple-use management concept, providing a variety of benefits to Floridians. Current management practices focus on restoration and maintenance of natural ecosystems, wildlife habitat maintenance and improvement, outdoor recreation, sustainable forest management, archaeological/historical resources management, and preservation/restoration of water resources.

Prescribed fire is one of the primary management tools used by the Florida Forest Service, mimicking natural fire while reducing the hazard of wildfires. Several management objectives are achieved through the use of prescribed fire. Some of these include: ecological maintenance and restoration, improving wildlife habitat, controlling disease and pests, reducing wildfire danger through fuel reduction, and improving appearance and access. All timber sales and miscellaneous revenue generating activities on the state forest are conducted following Silvicultural Best Management Practices (BMPs). Reforestation activities utilize site-specific management methods so that appropriate tree species, representing the historical natural community, are chosen.



Okaloacoochee Slough



Prescribed Fire



Florida Panther Kittens

For more information contact:
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(863) 612-0776
www.FDACS.gov/FLStateForests

Natural Resources

Many of the natural communities located in south Florida can be found on Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest. The largest natural feature on the State Forest is the Okaloacoochee Slough, a 15,400 acre slough marsh. The majority of the forest is composed of mesic pine flatwoods and slough marsh, comprising approximately 78 percent of the State Forest. Other natural communities include basin and depression marsh, wet flatwoods, mesic hammock, dome swamp, and wet prairie.

This unique assemblage of natural ecosystems across the landscape provides for significant plant and animal diversity. Several threatened and endangered species of wildlife can be found on the State Forest. These include: Florida panther, Florida black bear, Everglade snail kite, eastern indigo snake, crested caracara, gopher tortoise, sandhill crane and wood stork. Many species of upland and wetland plants occur on Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest, including several epiphytic (air plant) species. Wildflower viewing opportunities are plentiful.

Recreation

The forest offers a variety of recreational activities for visitors. There are 38 miles of forest roads open to vehicular traffic, hiking, and bicycling. Other recreational features include: hiking trails, an equestrian trail, primitive camping areas, picnic areas, a boardwalk, and an off-road bike trail. Wildlife viewing opportunities are abundant and the State Forest is part of the Great Florida Birding Trail. Fishing opportunities exist in canals and ponds.

Hunting is a popular activity on Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest and the forest is part of the Okaloacoochee Slough Wildlife Management Area. Most hunts are conducted on a quota system and include archery, spring turkey, general gun, family hunt and muzzle loading seasons. In addition, a small game hunting season, including hogs, takes place typically in late autumn/early winter. The forest is open to regulated hunting and fishing under the direction of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Visit MyFWC.com for additional information.