

STATE FOREST SPOTLIGHT

St. Marks River

The St. Marks River begins in the hardwood and cypress swamps of the Red Hills area in eastern Leon County, flowing through Plank Road State Forest from the northeast to the southwest and continues around 30 miles before merging into Apalachee Bay. It has been classified by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection as an Outstanding Florida Water.

The River brings rich biodiversity to Plank Road State Forest and provides excellent outdoor recreation opportunities, such as fishing, kayaking, hunting and wildlife viewing.

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 Florida's State Forests

In keeping with its mission to protect and manage Florida's forest resources for the present and future enjoyment of all Floridians, the Florida Forest Service (FFS) has developed rules which apply to all visitors to Plank Road State Forest. Some of the more important rules are:

- Please take all garbage with you when you leave. Containers are not provided on the forest. FFS requires a daily-use fee or annual pass for recreational use where posted.
- Recreational activities are welcome on open roads and trails not posted "Closed To Public Access".
- FFS management plans include prescribed burning most months of the year. For personal safety reasons, area users should contact FFS at (850)681-5950 for information and location of active prescribed burn areas.
- All Terrain Vehicles, Off Highway Motorcycles, and other unlicensed vehicles are not allowed on the forest.
- Hunting or taking of wildlife or fish is permitted during the open hunting and fishing seasons and in accordance with the Plank Road Wildlife Management Area Brochure, the Florida Hunting regulations handbook, and the Florida Freshwater Fishing Regulations Summary.
- Please do not obstruct gates, roads, or firelines.

For more information, visit:

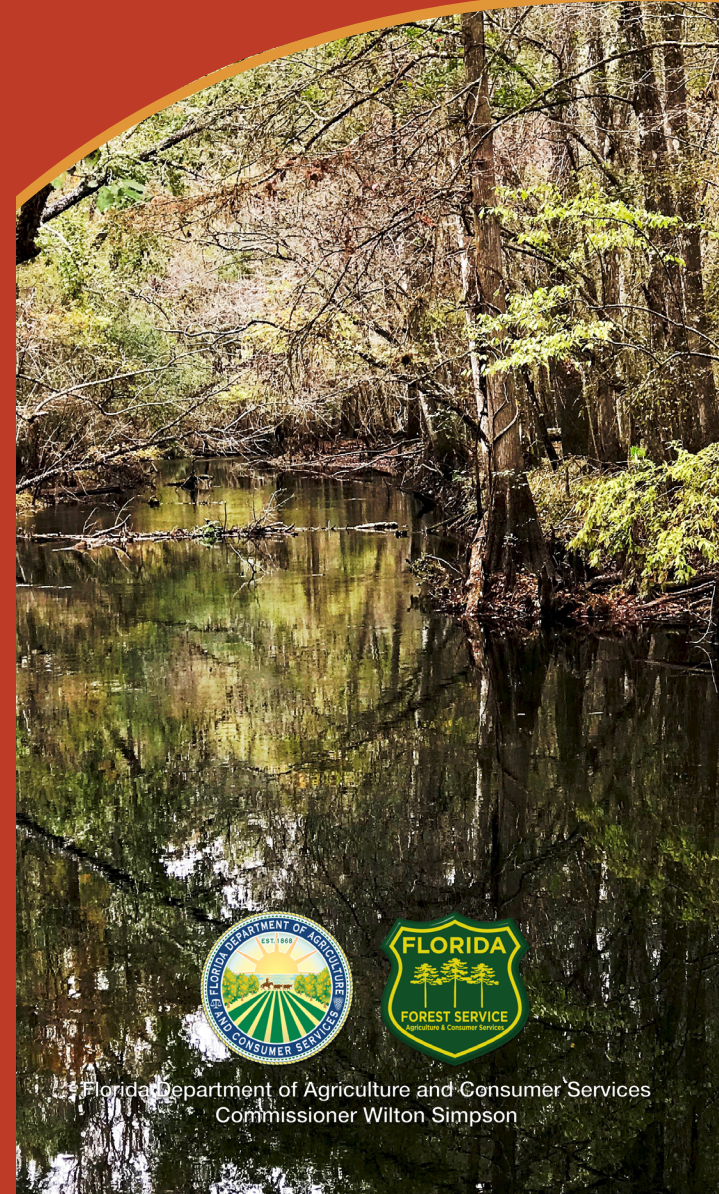
www.FDACS.gov/FLStateForests

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Florida Forest Service

Plank Road State Forest



Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Commissioner Wilton Simpson

History

Plank Road State Forest is one continuous tract of land comprising over 15,834 acres along the upper St. Marks River. Its name is derived from the historic wood plank road which was constructed in the mid-1800's with the purpose of transporting cotton and other goods from Newport, where the St. Marks River ceases to be reasonably navigable, to the Georgia line. Although there are no signs of the original plank road, a now paved portion of Old Plank Road makes up part of the forest's boundary on the west.

In more recent times much of the forest was in private timber production and hunt club leases prior to state acquisition in 2017. The original acquisition in 2017 was purchased through the Land Acquisition Trust Fund, as part of the Upper St. Marks River Corridor Florida Forever Project. Several other acquisitions since 2017 have added over 6,000 contiguous acres to the forest.

Forestry

Sustainable forest management practices on Plank Road State Forest are fundamental in the restoration and maintenance of forest ecosystems and provide long-term economic and social benefits for generations to come. This is done with activities such as reforestation, harvesting, restoration, timber stand improvement, all of which follow the Silviculture Best Management Practices (BMPs) defined by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Another crucial tool the Florida Forest Service utilizes to maintain healthy forest and wildlife habitat is periodic prescribed burning on the forest. The re-introduction and maintenance of historic fire regimes encourages the growth of the forest's commercially valuable trees and plants which provide food for the forest's wildlife.



Gum Creek



Spider Lily (*Hymenocallis littoralis*)



St. Marks River

For more information contact:
Plank Road State Forest Headquarters
8701 Old Plank Rd.
Tallahassee FL 32305
(850) 681-5936
www.FDACS.gov/FLStateForests

Natural Resources

The St. Marks River, a designated Outstanding Florida Water on Plank Road state Forest, forms on the northeast side of the forest, and many tributaries flow through the forest into the river, such as Gum Creek, Limestone Creek, Chicken Branch and Hamlin Branch.

There are many natural communities within the forest. Among these are floodplain swamp, bottomland forest, sandhill, and flatwoods communities. Bald cypress, red maple, swamp tupelo, sweetgum and water oak are commonly found in the floodplain swamps and bottomland forests. Longleaf pine, post oak and turkey oak can be seen in the drier sandhill areas. Flatwoods communities are dominated by slash pine, gallberry and swamp titi.

Many species including the American alligator, bald eagle, black bear, red shoulder hawk, white tailed deer, and wild turkey call Plank Road State Forest their home.

Recreation

Motor vehicles can access the forest through four access points off Old Plank Road, Tram Road, Highway 59, and Natural Bridge Road. Hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, and nature study can be enjoyed using existing roads and fire lines. Access to the St. Marks River for fishing is also available, as well as paddling for the more adventurous.

Currently hunting is the primary recreational opportunity on Plank Road State Forest. Approximately 14,887 acres are established as the Plank Road Wildlife Management Area and parts of it open to regulated hunting in coordination with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Visit myfwc.com for more information about permits and fees.