

INTRODUCTION

Twin Rivers State Forest (TRSF) is located along the banks of the Withlacoochee and Suwannee Rivers in eastern Madison, western Hamilton, and northwest Suwannee counties. The state forest totals just over 15,300 acres and is comprised of 16 non-contiguous tracts. Thirteen of the tracts, totaling over 12,000 acres, are owned by the Suwannee River Water Management District (District), with the Florida Forest Service (FFS) owning the Damascus, Hardee Springs, and Blue Springs Longleaf tracts.

The District acquired its properties through the Save Our Rivers (SOR) Program, created by the Florida Legislature in 1981, and the Preservation 2000 Program, established by the Legislature in 1990. In 1995, the FFS was given lead management responsibility for the Forest under a lease agreement with the SRWMD. Today, a lease with the same terms of the original agreement remains in full force and effect.

Using the multiple-use management concept, the FFS balances environmental, recreational, and resource use needs. This concept allows public use of the area while protecting the long-term health of the ecosystems and their resources. The TRSF is frequently used for hiking, biking, fishing, picnicking, horseback riding, primitive camping, and paddling. In addition, most of the state forest is designated as a Type I Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and is open to the public for hunting. Natural features such as the historic ecological communities are being protected, restored, and maintained. Timber management and associated silvicultural practices play an important role in the restoration and maintenance of the forest ecosystems. Various silvicultural practices, such as prescribed fire, are used solely or in combination to accomplish resource management goals. Prescribed burning is an often-used, efficient, and cost-effective tool that serves to control hardwoods and stimulate the recovery of herbaceous plants and native grasses.