



The mission of the Florida Forest Service is to protect & manage the forest resources of Florida, ensuring they are available for future generations.

JULY 1, 2021 - JUNE 30, 2022 FLORIDA FOREST SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

COOPERATIVE FORESTRY ASSISTANCE & STATE LANDS



**TO THE NASSAU COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**



Cooperative Forestry Assistance

The Cooperative Forestry Assistance (CFA) program provides private non-industrial forest landowners, schools, the public, and local governments with access to expert forestry knowledge and management advice at no cost through their county forester. The main goal of the program is to increase knowledge, enhance forest health and productivity, and to support landowner objectives.

The population in Nassau County may be growing, but timber still occupies most of the acreage. Forestland positively impacts our economy directly and indirectly. Table 1 lists the most recent comprehensive forestry statistics published by the [University of Florida / IFAS Extension](#)

Although this data was collected and published in 2017, it still is relevant in terms of economic impact to Nassau County. The three wood mills in Nassau County, and the countless number of log trucks that travel our highways, are only the tip of the iceberg. With recent and future development within our county, the implementation of forestry practices is being impacted and changed to a certain degree. We strive to do everything possible to ensure that those changes have a positive impact on our local economy.

By sustainably managing our forests using multiple use concepts and vigorous reforestation practices, timber will continue to be our greatest renewable resource and will continue to substantially contribute to our economy.

In addition to the economic benefits, our forests provide critical “ecosystem services” by filtering air and water, reducing runoff and moderating wind and temperature... They also enhance our quality of life by improving aesthetics, sustaining wildlife, and providing recreational opportunities.

Your County Forester provides private non-industrial forest landowners, local governments, and schools with direct forestry assistance. This year’s assistance included:

Total Acres: 413,475
Forestland Acres: 301,553
Privately Owned Forestland Acres: 269,974
Publicly Owned Forestland Acres: 24,388
Timber Removals (Net Green Tons): 582,695
Stumpage Value: \$11 Million
Total Contributions for All Forest Industries:
Industry Output: \$1,983 Million
Total Value Added: \$892 Million
Employment: 9,847 Jobs
Labor Income: \$528 Million
State and Local Taxes: \$65 Million
Total Employment Contributions by Industry (Jobs):
Forestry Production: 592
Primary Wood Product Manufacturing: 408
Secondary Wood Product Manufacturing: 153
Primary Paper Product Manufacturing: 8,203
Converted Paper Product Manufacturing: 461
Allied Manufacturing: 7
Wholesale Trade Lumber and Wood: 24

Table 1



New Forest Stewardship Property 2021/2022

- **General Timber Management Plans:** 64 plans were written covering 1,998 acres
- **Forest Stewardship Management Plans:** 4 plans were written covering 804 acres. 222 acres were certified in the American Tree Farm System and 764 acres were certified in the Forest Stewardship Program).
- **Arbor Day Events:** The CFA forester and State Lands forester participated in a Florida Arbor Day tree planting event in Fernandina Beach (trees planted at Egans Creek). They also presented and participated in two National Arbor Day events at Callahan Intermediate School. At the intermediate school, there was a presentation, a tree giveaway, and a tree dedication. The CFA forester procured \$1,055.64 in UCF grant money for the purchase of and/or planting of trees for all events.



Forest Stewardship Property 2021/ 2022

- **Cost Share Applications:** During the past year, there were 22 cost share applications submitted for landowners seeking financial assistance to implement forestry practices. Of the 22 submitted, 12 were approved, and 7 are pending approval. Of the 12 approved cost shares, 1 is on extension and 1 has expired without being implemented (both delays are weather related). Also, of the 12 approved cost shares, 10 practices were completed. The landowners that completed the practices were reimbursed with grant money in the amount of \$103,303.67 to assist in the site preparation and planting of 923 acres.
- **Prescribed Burning Plans:** 4 new prescribed burning plans were written for private landowners covering 133 acres.



National Arbor Day Presentation and Tree Giveaway at Callahan Intermediate School.

Just one private landowner prescribed burn was completed this year, but it covered approximately 142 acres.

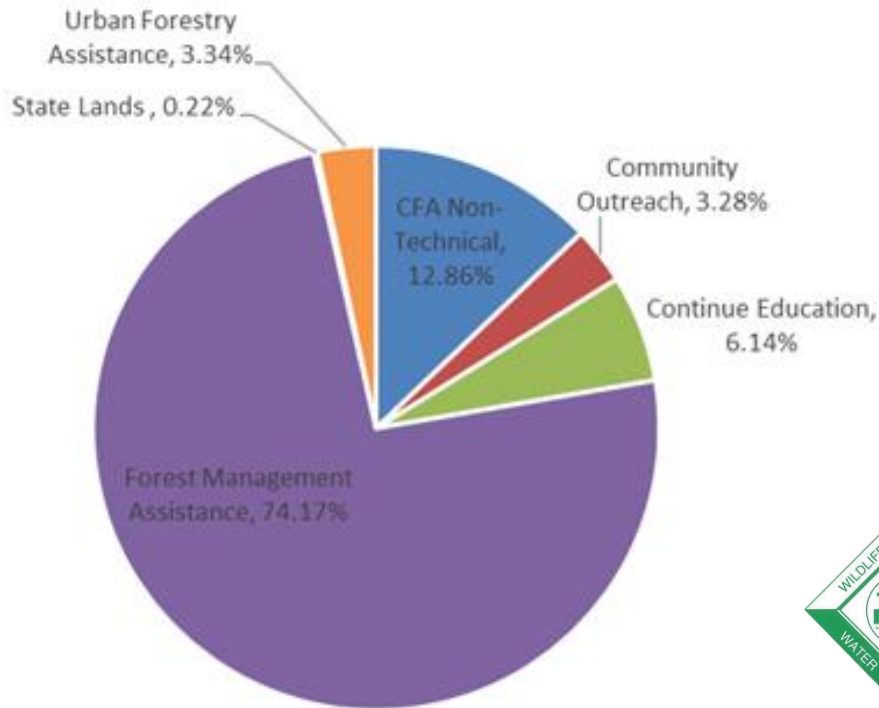
Educational Outreach Events or Programs for Youth: 5 programs impacting 237 students were implemented over the past year. The outreach programs with the youth seem to be recovering as COVID restrictions have been gradually relaxed. These programs included FFA, Career Day and Envirothon.

- **Informational Outreach Articles:** 4 articles were submitted for publication in local newspapers. Topics included Urban Forests, Trees on home construction sites, Arbor Day, and Fusiform Rust in pine trees. The CFA forester also was interviewed for a local news publication about a tree dedication during National Arbor Day.
- **Professional Development:** The CFA forester attended or participated in 23 educational programs this fiscal year. This effort in continuing education is in support of landowner assistance. Skills and knowledge obtained or enhanced were mapping, aerial photo interpretation, safety, fire prevention and mitigation, communications, and arboriculture. This training should help the CFA forester better serve Nassau County.
- **Miscellaneous landowner assists:** Numerous calls for assistance with various forestry (urban & rural) issues have been responded to throughout the year. Responses may entail the provision of advice and/or information over the phone or via email. Often a site visit is required to address the forestry issue.



Live Oak Tree Provided for Tree Dedication During National Arbor Day at Callahan Intermediate School

CFA Time Allocation by Activity



Nassau County Forester Time Allocation FY 2020/2022

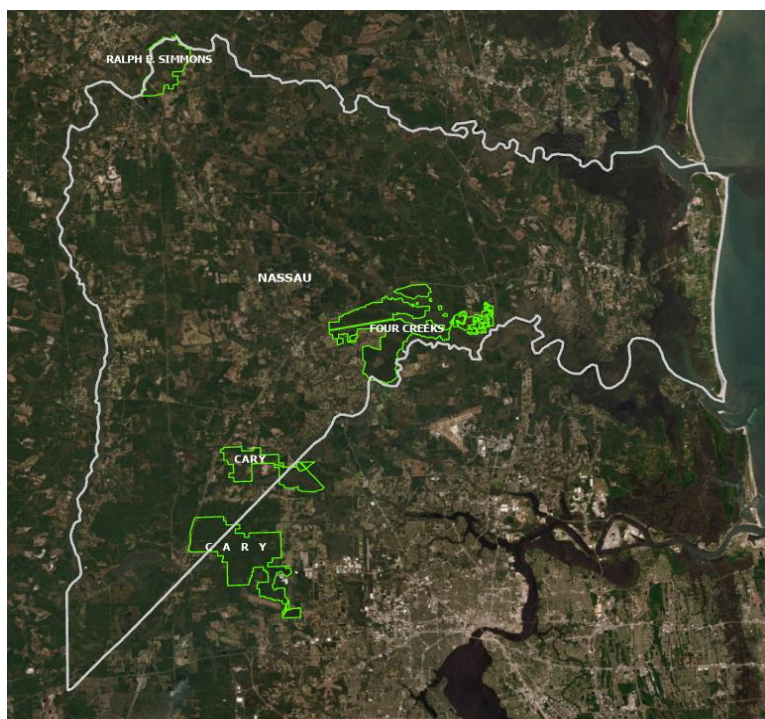
The pie chart above is a summary of how the Nassau County Forester's time was spent over the past year. As illustrated (and expected), most of the time was allocated to Forest Management Assistance.

As the county continues to grow and change, it is anticipated that the percentage of time spent on Urban Forestry will increase.

Also, as the pandemic situation improves, the community outreach percentage is expected to increase.

Each county in the State of Florida is unique with varying forestry needs. A large part of the task of the CFA forester is to recognize and respond to the unique needs of his/her county(ies).

State Lands Program



Nassau County State Forests

The Florida Forest Service manages more than one million acres of public forest land across the state. **Ralph E. Simmons Memorial State Forest** and **Four Creeks State Forest** are in Nassau County. **Cary State Forest** lies primarily in Duval County and so most silvicultural activity occurs there and is not discussed in this report. However, some recreational opportunities exist, and improvements have been made on the Nassau portion of **Cary** (these are listed within this report).

All State forests are managed under a multiple use, sustained yield, concept for timber, wildlife, recreation, aesthetics, and soil & water conservation. However,

in Nassau County, Four Creeks is usually the recipient of a higher level of harvest activity due to volume available and the greater need for thinning operations. Marketing timber generates significant revenue for the management of state lands and associated recreational facilities and programs. Marketing timber also stimulates the local economy through direct employment and the purchase of goods and services by timber businesses and their employees.

Four Creeks State Forest



This year, Four Creeks State Forest continues to be certified through the Sustainable Forestry Initiative Standard. Four Creeks encompasses 13,658 acres between Callahan and Yulee, being bordered or bisected by Boggy Creek, Alligator (Mills) Creek, Plummer Creek, and Thomas Creek. Slash and loblolly pine plantations dominate the flatwoods ecotype, while natural hardwoods, pine and cypress occupy the drainages. Grass-dominated marshland can be found

on the eastern portions of the forest. The timber on our forests helps support our recreational facilities and programs.

This year on the Four Creeks State Forest, there were two thinning sales (7 Pines Timber Sale and Short Haul Timber Sale) encompassing 285 acres of pine plantation. Both sales combined generated 12,532 tons of chip-n-saw and pulpwood. Proceeds from these sales will support recreational and land management projects and activities on Florida Forest Service managed lands in Nassau County and throughout the state. Also, logging operations often necessitate road repairs and maintenance that are beneficial to other recreational and management activities that occur on the forest.



Thinning Harvest 2021/2022

Other silviculture activities on Four Creeks State Forest this year included 1,818 acres of prescribed burning and the monitoring and control of invasive plant species on 611 acres.

Benefits provided by prescribed burning include:

- wildfire mitigation by reducing forest fuels
- decreased vegetative competition for soil moisture and nutrients to the crop trees
- promotion of new vegetative growth for wildlife foraging opportunities
- enhanced visual aesthetics

Using the multi-use land management concept means that many of the activities and improvements on state forests are for the recreational benefit of the public. Headed up by our recreation coordinator and supported by our state lands forester and forest rangers, there are many recreational opportunities on our State Forests. Hunting opportunities are one of the most widely used recreational activities on the Four Creeks State Forest. The following are some of the other areas available for recreational opportunities along with a description of recent improvements:

- **Boggy Creek Landing Recreation Area**
 - Picnicking
 - Boating
 - Fishing



South Entrance to Four Creeks State Forest (New Signage in progress)

Boggy Creek Landing continued to receive some upgrades that were started in the 2020/2021 fiscal year. Fencing was purchased and will be installed to delineate parking and recreation use. This fiscal year, the boat ramp was cleaned out and new surface material was installed for use by vehicles towing small boats.

- **Old Wood Shingle Mill Trailhead**

- Hiking
- Horseback Riding
- Birding
- Photography

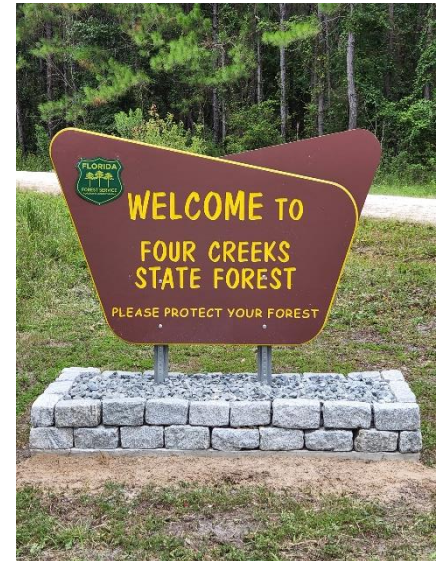
The Old Wood Shingle Mill Trailhead off SR 200 received new trailhead and parking area signage. Also, a kiosk containing visitor information was installed.

- **Hobbs Landing Recreation Area**

- Picnicking
- Boating
- Fishing

- **Sauls Landing Recreation Area**

- Picnicking
- Boating
- Fishing



South Entrance to Four Creeks State Forest (New Signage Completed)

Cary State Forest

The Nassau County portion of the Cary State Forest also has some recreational opportunities and was the recipient of some upgrades: The entire forest received new road signage that will help visitors navigate around the numerous forest roads.

- **Thomas Creek Parking Area & Historic Trail**

- Ample Parking
- Hiking
- Birding
- Horseback Riding
- Photography

- **Cary Campground**

- RV Camping with Hookups
- RV Dump Station
- Primitive Camping
- Horseback Riding
- Birding
- Photography

At the Cary campground, new wayfinding and safety signage was installed to improve driving navigation and safety for visitors. Also, a new overflow RV site was started this year to accommodate campers with reservation issues. Finally, the Cary campground received new moisture resistant underground electrical connections that should overcome past issues that arose during wet ground conditions.

- **Cary Pavilion**
 - Picnicking
 - Outdoor Grilling
 - Hiking
 - Birding
 - Photography



New Wayfinding Signage on CSF Near Campground and Pavilion

Ralph Simmons State Forest

Ralph E. Simmons Memorial State Forest encompasses 3,638 acres along the St. Mary's River near Kings Ferry. Here, visitors can experience pristine longleaf pine sandhills that transition into hardwood, pine, and cypress bottoms.

This past year on Ralph Simmons State Forest there was one timber sale (Azkaban Timber Sale) encompassing 355 acres of pine plantation thinning. Due to wet ground conditions, only 50 acres were completed this year. As a result, the sale only generated 3,264 tons of pine volume and will be continued this year. Since this property is owned by the St. Johns Water Management District and managed by the Florida Forest Service, a portion (20%) of the revenue generated from this timber sale will be used for future management activities on Ralph Simmons State Forest. Other silviculture activities on Ralph Simmons State Forest include 931 acres of prescribed burning and the monitoring and control of invasive plant species on 19 acres.



2021/2022/ Timber Sale

There are ample recreational areas and opportunities on Ralph Simmons State Forest. As with Four Creeks State Forest, hunting is one of the recreational opportunities that is widely used on Ralph Simmons State Forest. Except for specific periods during hunting season, access into this forest is by hiking bicycling or horseback only (no motorized vehicles).

Other areas and recreational opportunities on Ralph Simmons State Forest are as follows:

- **Cabin Campsite (near St. Marys River)**
 - Semi primitive camping
 - Fishing
 - Outdoor Grilling
 - Picnicking
- **Scotts Landing Campsite**
 - Primitive Group Camping
 - Public Boat Ramp Nearby (Boating & Fishing on St. Marys River)
 - Outdoor Grilling
 - Picnicking
- **Hawkins Shop Landing**
 - Primitive Camping
 - Outdoor Grilling
 - Boating
 - Fishing
 - Picnicking
- **White Sands Landing**
 - Primitive Camping
 - Outdoor Grilling
 - Boating
 - Fishing
 - Picnicking
- **White Trail, Red Trail, and Yellow Trail**
 - Hiking
 - Horseback Riding
 - Birding
 - Photography



View Showing Topography Towards St. Marys River (RSSF)

New interpretive and wayfinding signage was installed on the Red and Yellow trails. This signage should give visitors more insight into the forest environment and assist in navigation.

A new scenic viewing area that emphasizes the diverse topography on Ralph Simmons was constructed on the Red trail. The viewing area is located near the highest point on Ralph Simmons and visitors are treated to a view north towards the St. Marys River, and south towards the entrance to the forest. Forest management practices are a continuous endeavor on all state forests.



New Interpretive Signage (RSSF)

All three forests have an active prescribed burning program, which reduces the risk and intensity of wildfire and restores or enhances native, fire-dependent ecosystems. Invasive plant management is also an ongoing process as we strive to protect our natural resources.



Longleaf Plantation (RSSF) - 4 years since last P-Burn (7/2018)



Part of same Longleaf Plantation (RSSF) - P-Burned 7/2022

Summary

The Florida Forest Service provides a comprehensive land management program to the Nassau County public. This program integrates fire protection, multiple use land management on public lands, and private landowner assistance. These services, individually and combined, provide a useful and valuable benefit to the citizens of Nassau County.

It is our privilege to serve Nassau County and we appreciate the county's support as we provide for the community's forestry, environmental, ecological, and recreational needs.

Photo and content contributions by:

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