

FLORIDA LAND STEWARD



A Quarterly Newsletter for Florida Landowners and Resource Professionals

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The Best Job in the World: Your County Forester

By Dave Conser, Florida Forest Service

I have the best job in the world. I have the privilege of assisting private landowners, homeowners, agencies, counties, municipalities and other folks with forest management advice as an employee of the Florida Forest Service. I've worked as the County Forester, serving the citizens of Alachua County, for over 26 years.

Hopefully you have had an opportunity to work with your County Forester, or are at least aware of the services available to you. You likely may not be aware of the myriad of things your County Forester can assist you with. On the other hand, I've had more than one landowner ask me when I was going to come out and plant their trees. With a smile on my face, I have to add, "I don't do any work; I just give free advice!" (I told you it was the best job in the world!). In most cases your County

Forester will provide advice, and a list of contractors who will actually carry out the work on your property. And if you think about it, that's a tremendous advantage for you, since it means you are getting unbiased advice. Here are some of the ways your County Forester can help you:

General, rural forest management:

- Written management plans, including Forest Stewardship plans, general forest management plans and plan revisions
- Prescribed burning – this is one area where your County Forester may actually break a serious sweat on your property. Check with your County Forester about burning assistance for your particular situation.
- Inspections and Certifications under the Tree Farm Program

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County Forester Dave Conser assisting with Forest Stewardship Program Field Day.
Photo Credit: Chris Demers

- Insect, Disease and Invasive Plant identification
- Lists of forestry contractors for dozens of management activities
- Limited timber marketing information, such as market trends and appropriate type(s) of harvest your forest may be ready for. County Foresters cannot sell your timber for you – a private consulting forester is recommended for this.
- **Advice on a variety of topics, including:**
 - Reforestation, or planting of pines, hardwoods, or other native vegetation, including species selection, planting rates and site preparation needs
 - Early rotation management, including survival rates, competition control, mowing and fire lines
 - Insect, Disease and Invasive Plant management
 - Mid rotation management opportunities, like pine straw harvesting, prescribed burning, and thinning
- Cost-sharing possibilities – programs possibly available to pay a portion of your forest management costs – nowadays usually associated with Stewardship Plan preparation, planting of longleaf pine, treatments for reducing the threat of Southern Pine Beetle infestations, or control of cogongrass
- Basic wildlife management, often in coordination with Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission personnel
- Alternative forest products you may be able to produce, such as shiitake mushrooms, Christmas trees, ornamental trees, cattle grazing, fruits and nuts, and others

Urban forestry:

- Assistance to communities with their urban forestry programs
- Help with “Urban Community Forestry Grants” that your city, municipality or other public entity can apply for shade tree and hazardous tree assessment
- Arbor Day celebrations

Other assistance:

- Forest education, such as workshops, presentations to civic groups or other groups of adults or children, or career day at the local secondary school
- Assistance to local TV, radio, newspaper and other media

However, we County Foresters don’t do it all. In many cases a private consulting forester may be necessary and/or appropriate for your situation. Some of those situations include timber sales, marking or appraisal; large acreage/complex situation landowners, especially those who need more than 24 man hours of assistance per year; management plans of more than 160 acres; and situations where expert court testimony may be necessary. You can find your County Forester online at http://www.floridaforests-service.com/field_operations/ county_foresters or call, mail or visit your local Florida Forest Service office.

Changes to Landowner Liability Protections for Recreational Activities

By Joe Prenger, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

There has recently been an increase in liability protections for private property owners who provide public opportunities for outdoor recreation on their property. Prior to July of this year, landowners had limited protections from liability for activities taking place on their land under section 375.251, F.S. (Florida Statutes; <http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/>), but only for private property that was leased to the State for outdoor recreational purposes, or to properties on which the owner did not charge for entry to the property, nor conduct commercial or other activity where profit was derived from

public patronage on any part of the property. Earlier this year, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC) proposed a change to this statute which was passed by the Florida Legislature and signed by Governor Scott. This amendment expands the limitation of liability protection for private landowners, as explained in the following open letter from FFWCC Chairman Kenneth Wright:

Dear Friend:

Many private landowners in Florida have wanted to make their properties available to the public for outdoor

recreation. In the past you had to enter into a lease with the state or open up your land to the general public to be protected from liability.

*But the Florida Legislature passed a bill in 2012, and Gov. Scott signed it into law, amending s. 375.251 F.S. to make it easier for landowners to accommodate the public, including individuals or small groups, and still have liability protection. The change, which went into effect July 1, provides liability protection to landowners who enter into a **written agreement** with the state – rather than a more formal lease – to make their land available for outdoor recreation.*

It also provides liability protection for private landowners who open up their lands to any person primarily for hunting, fishing or wildlife viewing.

Participating landowners must meet these requirements:

- *Give written or posted notice to users that you have limited liability.*
- *Do not charge or make a profit from those using your land for outdoor recreation.*

- *Bear in mind, of course, that there is no liability protection against intentional injury.*

Please consult your attorney, as each landowner's situation may be different.

These changes make it easier for landowners to host a day-long youth hunt or a weekend fishing derby. And that makes it more enticing for kids

– and adults – to enjoy Florida's great outdoors.

Altogether, it's a win-win-win situation: Good for landowners. Good for the public. Good for conservation.

Sincerely,

*Kenneth Wright, Chairman
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation
Commission*

Florida Chipmunks

By Chris Winchester, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is looking for information on the whereabouts of chipmunks in Northwest Florida. Chipmunks are currently listed as a Species of Special Concern by FWC, and Biologists are looking to incorporate public knowledge into a formal evaluation of population status. If you see a chipmunk in Florida you can report the location of the sighting on a new web site developed by FWC.

Reporting chipmunk sightings is simple and easy. Just navigate to <https://public.myfwc.com/hsc/chipmunk/getlatlong.aspx>. Use the Google Maps tool to identify the location where the chipmunk was sighted. Enter as much information about yourself and the chipmunk sighting as you would like, then click save.

Although common throughout much of the Eastern US, chipmunks are rare in Florida. In fact, many residents and outdoor enthusiasts have never seen a chipmunk in Florida. Despite their rarity, chipmunks are conspicuous when present and no other animal in Florida bears close resemblance. They are active during the day and have five, black lines running along the back of their reddish-brown fur. When spotted, chipmunks are often seen filling their cheek pouches with acorns and other seeds and traveling

to and from their burrow, where the food is stored for later consumption.

Some information on chipmunk range and habitat use exists, but additional information is needed to fully evaluate their status in Florida. Residents of Florida and wildlife professionals have reported chipmunks along portions of the Escambia, Yellow, Backwater, and Choctawhatchee rivers. In addition chipmunks appear to be common in the Crestview area and have been confirmed in the vicinity of Holt and Defuniak Springs. Preferred habitat appears to be oak dominated forests, but chipmunks will take advantage of the comforts of back-yard habitat. Bird feeders, large oak trees and the variety of safe hiding places present in many yards seem to encourage chipmunk presence. In addition, chipmunks may be more active in the early morning during summer, choosing to forage during the cooler time of day. However, information on activity is sparse. Anecdotal information describing

the habitat used and the time of day the chipmunk was observed is much appreciated.

Public contributions to chipmunk research are invaluable. Sighting reports from residents throughout Northwest Florida is the quickest and most efficient way for FWC Biologists to gather information on chipmunk range and habitat use over such a large area. Any question or comments regarding chipmunk research can be directed to Chris. Winchester@MyFWC.com.



Photo Credit: Dr. Lisa Wagner, Clemson University

Coyotes vs. Bobcats: What Are They Eating?

By Lauren Watine, Bill Giuliano, John Olson, and
Jim Selph, UF/IFAS Extension Service

Over the next 3 years (2012-2014), the University of Florida will be conducting a study of coyote and bobcat diets in Florida. Of particular interest is the importance of popular wildlife species, including white-tailed deer, turkeys, and bobwhite quail, livestock, and pets in the diet of these predators. Diets will be determined by examining the stomach contents of coyotes and bobcats legally harvested or obtained in Florida.

We are asking for your help in obtaining legally acquired coyote and bobcat carcasses, with or without pelts. We will also accept coyote and bobcat stomachs and intestines if you cannot store the whole carcass. If you have at least 5 animals that you would like to provide us, you can contact Lauren Watine (352-846-0558; lnwatine@ufl.edu) or Bill Giuliano (352-846-0575; docg@ufl.edu) at the University of Florida to arrange for pickup.

If you have fewer than 5 animals or are going to be coming through Gainesville, arrangements can be made to get carcasses from you at the University or combine your animals with others in your area for a pickup. Carcasses or stomachs and intestines should be frozen in a suitable bag or container, and include the name of contributor, animal sex, date harvested/obtained, and location harvested/obtained. We have obtained a permit from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for this project, and will keep information provided by you for this project anonymous to the extent possible by law.

We greatly appreciate your help with this valuable study!

Plants Behaving Badly: Skunk Vine

By Alicia Campanella

In the late 1880's, an especially interesting, but rather unpleasant, exotic plant was introduced to Florida. It goes by the name skunkvine or *Paederia foetida*. The Latin translation of the word foetida is "bad smelling". All it takes is crushing the leaves or any part of the vine to see why this sulfur-rich plant is known for being so malodorous! Skunk vine is native to eastern and south eastern Asia, but was introduced to Florida with the intention that it would be a potential fiber crop. Like many exotic species introduced for commercial purposes, within a matter of years the consequences of the introduction became clear. Skunk vine quickly escaped and began invading Florida's wildlands. It was classified as a category 1 invasive exotic plant as early as 1993, and is currently found in seventeen Florida counties.

Identification... Follow Your Nose!

In addition to its awful smell, skunk vine can also be identified by its leaves, which are narrow, heart shaped, with sharply pointed tips. Its flowers are often pink, light purple or

gray, all with a red center. The seeds are brown, typically found with two seeds that are black in color. It is a woody, thornless vine that often uses other vines to make its way high into the canopy. Its invasive nature can be credited to the fact that it reproduces not only via seeds, but also vegetatively. It roots at its nodes, and will grow along the ground until it finds a suitable host (sometimes another vine) to begin its upward climb. Within a matter of time, it shades out and kills its host vine or tree, as well as plants in the mid canopy and understory, similar to the effects of air potato and kudzu. Unfortunately, like most successful invaders, skunk vine thrives in a variety of ecosystems, from wet lowlands to dryer upland habitats.

Florida Plant Communities Feel the Effects

Skunk vine is currently considered a threat to all habitat types in Florida, including economically important ones such as citrus groves. Two Federally listed endangered plants are also threatened by skunk vine. The



Photo Credit: Ken Langeland, UF

first is the Brooksville bell flower, (*Campanula robinsiae*) and Cooley's water willow, (*Justicia cooley*i). Young pines and other species vital to the survival of many wildlife species are also at risk.

Eradication

Many eradication methods have been experimented with. This includes fire, flooding, and manual removal. To date, the most effective method is the use of herbicides containing glyphosate and triclopyr. Applications

are most effective during the vines active growing seasons- spring and summer. As always, carefully follow manufacturers safety labels and use personal protective equipment. Biological control methods are currently being researched. In Asia, species of sawflies and leaf beetles have been identified as suitable hosts, and these insects adequately control native populations of skunk vine. Many years of testing would have to be undertaken in Florida to ensure that only the target species would

be adversely affected by insects introduced for this purpose. Also, maintaining a diverse population of different plant species is a great way to deter monocultures of any exotic species, skunk vine included.

For more information about this plant, other invasive exotic species, funding, and regional efforts to prevent and control infestations see the Florida Invasive Species Partnership web site at <http://www.floridainvasives.org/>

25th Anniversary of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners Program

by Delta Harris, U.S Fish and Wildlife Service

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (Program) was officially established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1987. The Partners Program provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners and Tribes who are willing to work with us and other partners on a voluntary basis to help meet the habitat needs of our Federal Trust Species. The Program can assist with projects in all habitat types which conserve or restore native vegetation, hydrology, and soils associated with imperiled ecosystems such as longleaf pine, bottomland hardwoods, tropical forests, native prairies, marshes, rivers and streams, or otherwise provide an important habitat

requisite for a rare, declining or protected species.

Locally-based field biologists work one-on-one with private landowners and other partners to plan, implement, and monitor their projects. Partners Program field staff help landowners find other sources of funding and help them through the permitting process, as necessary. This level of personal attention and follow-through is a significant strength of the Program that has led to national recognition and wide support. Growth has been tremendous during the past 25 years. The program now provides assistance to all 50 states and U.S. territories. The Program has gained

national recognition as a vanguard in the new era of cooperative conservation based on the premise that fish and wildlife conservation is a responsibility shared by citizens and the government. For more information contact the Florida Partners Program Coordinator at (904) 731-3096, stan_simpkins@fws.gov



Get Email Updates!

Don't miss out on upcoming events and news! Send an email to cdemers@ufl.edu to be added to the Stewardship listserv. Updates are sent weekly and include a link to the current and back issues of the Florida Land Steward.

TIMBER PRICE UPDATE

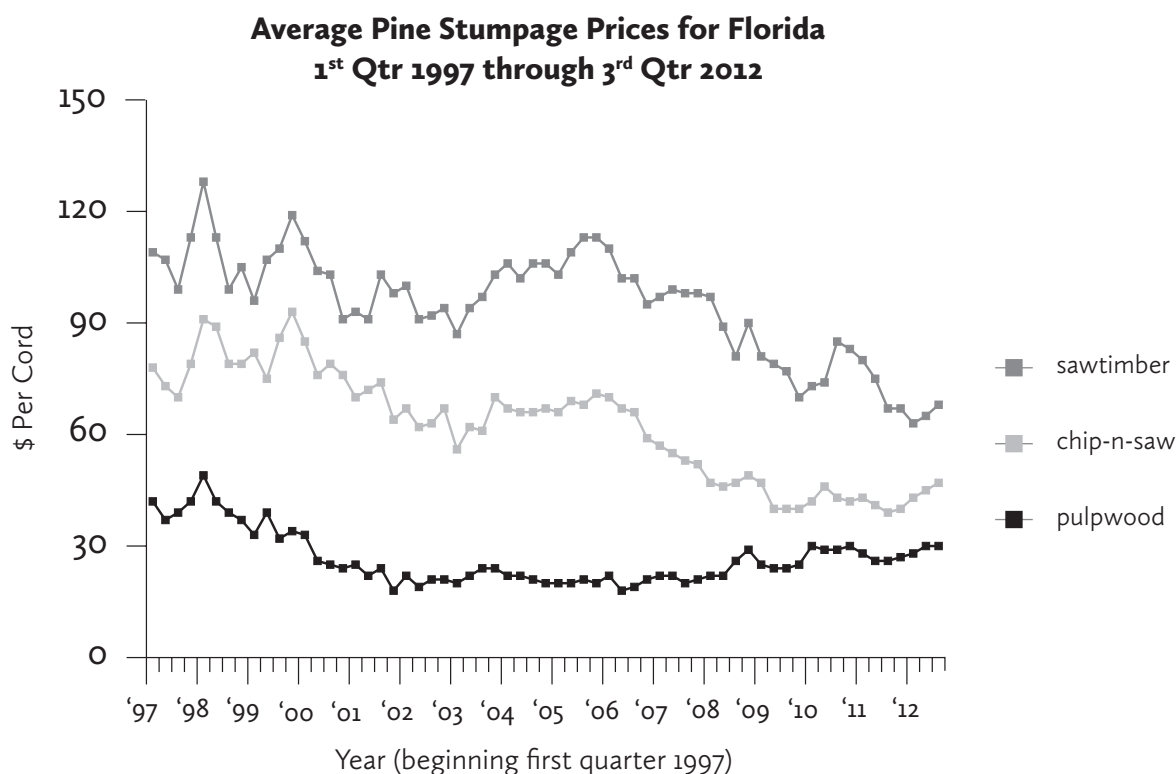
The timber pricing information below is useful for observing trends over time, but does not reflect current conditions at a particular location. Landowners considering a timber sale are advised to solicit the services of a consulting forester to obtain current local market conditions.

Average stumpage prices for the three major products in Florida, as reported in the 3rd Quarter 2012 Timber Mart-South report were:

Florida Stumpage Prices	
Pine pulpwood:	\$30/cord (\$11/ton), same as 2 nd Qtr 2012
Pine C-N-S:	\$47/cord (\$17/ton), ↑
Pine sawtimber:	\$68/cord (\$25/ton), ↑

Trend Report

Average prices for the 3 major timber products reported showed some moderate improvement in Florida and across much of the South. While markets are still weak compared to past years they are showing some signs of improvement. Despite their long-term, low trend of the last decade, pulpwood prices are on the rise in many areas. While economic distress in Europe continues to affect global markets, the U.S. housing market continues its slow recovery.



Timber Mart-South is compiled and produced at the Center for Forest Business, Warnell School of Forest Resources, University of Georgia, under contract with the Frank W. Norris Foundation, a non-profit corporation serving the forest products industry. See <http://www.tmart-south.com/> for information on subscriptions.

CONGRATULATIONS

CERTIFIED FOREST STEWARDS AND TREE FARMERS

For more information about becoming a Certified Forest Steward or Tree Farmer, call your County Forester or learn about it at:

http://www.fl-dof.com/forest_management/cfa_steward_index.html

or

http://www.floridaforest.org/tree_farm.php

These landowners have a current Forest Stewardship and/or Tree Farm management plan for their property and have demonstrated excellent stewardship of their land resources.



Mr. and Mrs. Terry Morris and family, Jackson County



Gary and Cathy Barber, Baker County



William and Ann Smith with granddaughter Emily, Liberty County



Doug Moore, Forest Steward, Baker County



Bruce Huffmaster, Liberty County



Joe Nelson, Washington County



Ray Horne (L) with Andy Lamborn, Bradford County



Chris Bauer, Calhoun County



William Wallace (L) with Ariel Sewell, Calhoun County



Craig Fletcher, Jackson County

Upcoming Stewardship, Small Farm and Other Events

Date	Event, Location, Contact
Nov 13	Silviculture Best Management Practices Workshop , 9:00 am - 2:30 pm, UF/IFAS Polk County Extension Office, Bartow, FL. Organized and presented by Florida Forest Service. Free, approved for 4 hours of SAF CAT-1 CFE's. <i>Register by November 2 by contacting Robin Holland, (352) 732-1273, Robin.Holland@freshfromflorida.com</i>
Dec 6	Forest Stewardship/FL-GA Wildlife Tour at Waukeenah Plantation , Jefferson County, 9 am to 2 pm ET. \$10 fee covers lunch and materials. <i>Details and registration at http://flgaextgamemgmt2012.eventbrite.com/ or call UF/IFAS Jefferson County Extension at (850) 342-0187 to reserve a space.</i>
Dec 9-12	5th National Conference on Grazing Lands , Caribe Royale Hotel, 8101 World Center Dr, Orlando, FL 32821. <i>Details online at http://www.glci.org/5NCGGL.html</i>
Dec 12	Forest Stewardship Polycom Workshop: Forest Stewardship Ecosystem Services and Greenbelt Update , 1:00 to 5:00 pm, at participating UF/IFAS Extension Facilities. <i>Details and registration at http://fsp-videoconference121212.eventbrite.com/ or contact Chris Demers for information at (352) 846-2375 or cdemers@ufl.edu</i>
Jan 17, 2013	Forest Stewardship Tour at Scrub Jay Pond, Property of Fred and Ann Hunter , Lake County, 9 am to 2 pm ET. Cost is \$10 per person, lunch and materials included. \$10 fee. <i>Details and registration on-line at http://fsp-tour011713.eventbrite.com/</i>
Feb 7	Forest Stewardship Workshop: Timberland Security for Landowners , 9 am to 2 pm ET, UF/IFAS Columbia County Extension Office, 164 SW Mary Ethel Ln, Lake City, FL 32025. \$10 fee. <i>Contact UF/IFAS Columbia County Extension at (386) 752-5384 to register.</i>
Feb 14	Forest Stewardship Tour at Property of John Nash , Levy County, 9 am to 2 pm ET. \$10 fee. <i>Contact Chris Demers at (352) 846-2375 or cdemers@ufl.edu for info or to sign up.</i>

For many more events and information see: flsteward.org

The Florida Land Steward Newsletter is a University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Florida Forest Service, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Florida Tree Farm joint project:

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