

# FLORIDA LAND STEWARD



A Quarterly Newsletter for Florida Landowners and Resource Professionals **SPRING/SUMMER 2022 - VOLUME 11, NO. 2**

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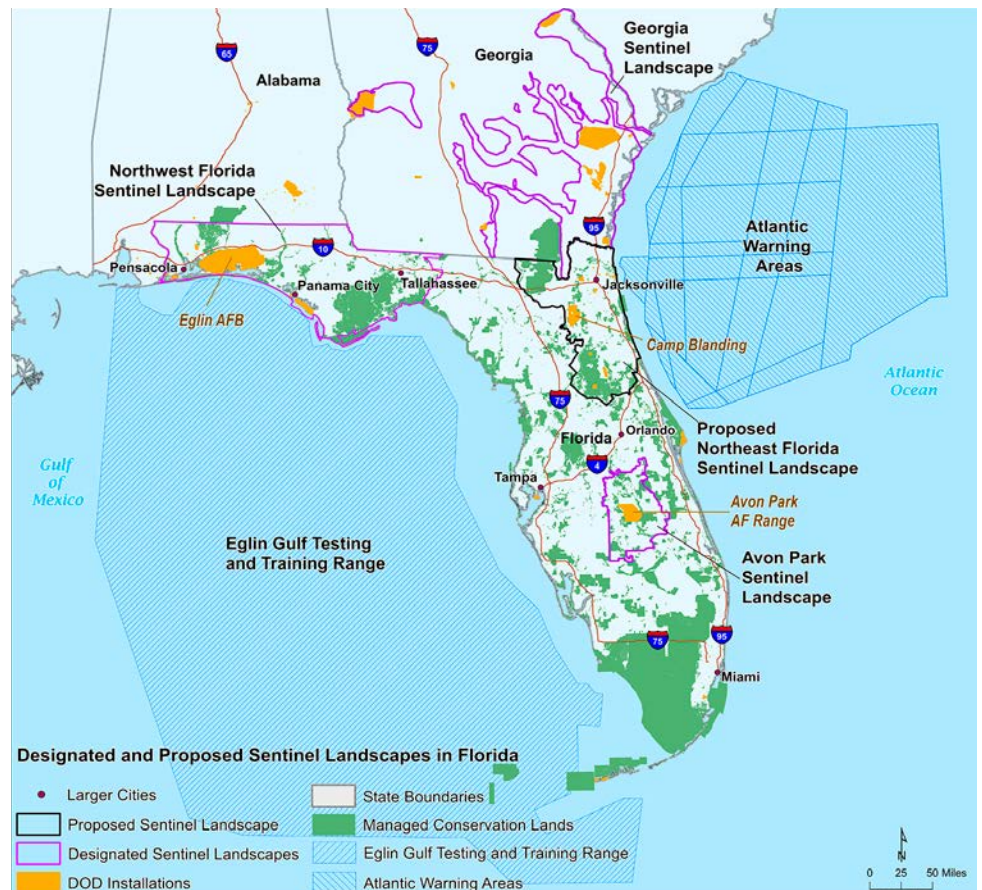
## Northwest Florida Designated as a Sentinel Landscape

By Chris Demers, University of Florida and Kent Wimmer, Florida Defenders of Wildlife

The Sentinel Landscapes in Florida Partnership is a statewide coalition of federal agencies, state and local governments, and non-governmental organizations that works with private landowners to advance sustainable land management practices around military installations and ranges. In addition to benefiting the natural resources and rural economies of these regions, these efforts help to maintain the operations and mission of

military installations that exist in these areas. The Sentinel Landscape designation is made by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Department of Defense, and the U.S. Department of the Interior. Florida is the only state with two sentinel landscapes – Northwest Florida and Avon Park Air Force Range, and a third has been proposed in Northeast Florida.

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The Northwest Florida, Avon Park Air Force Range, and the proposed Northeast Florida Sentinel Landscapes encompass rural and agricultural lands, public and private conservation lands, habitats for iconic Florida wildlife and plant species, and some of the nation's most important military installations and ranges.

Funding for this publication is provided by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Florida Forest Service and a grant from the Florida Sustainable Forestry Initiative Implementation Committee.

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Designated in February 2022, the Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape encompasses rural and agricultural lands, iconic longleaf pine forests, threatened and endangered species habitat, and all of northwest Florida's military installations. These include Eglin Air Force Base (AFB), Tyndall AFB, Naval Air Station (NAS) Pensacola, NAS Whiting Field, Naval Support Activity Panama City, Eglin Gulf Test and Training Range, Hurlburt Field, Saufley Field, and Corry Station.

These nine Department of Defense installations and ranges are integral to military training, weapons testing, special operations, joint cyber warfare and aviation pilot training for Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard.

Sentinel Landscapes aim to enable collaborative efforts and provide greater access to funding assistance from federal, state, and local governments and private sector programs. These programs will

help to provide military mission assurance, restore and increasing resiliency and sustainability of habitat and water resources, retain working agriculture and forest lands as compatible, resilient, and sustainable land uses; mitigate coastal risks, and increase climate resilience of military installations and the landscapes that overlap mission footprints. For more information see <https://sentinellandscapes.org/>

## Enhancing Wetland Habitats for Resident and Migratory Waterfowl

By Pete Diamond, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Private landowners often ask how they can attract wildlife – primarily game species, such as white-tailed deer, wild turkey, quail and waterfowl – to their properties. While these species have a shared need for food, water, cover and space, each has specific habitat requirements. The key to attracting and retaining healthy populations of Florida's iconic game species is managing the amount and type of these resources to improve the quality and integrity of both upland and wetland habitats.

This is especially important for waterfowl because wetlands are necessary for their

day-to-day survival. Important considerations include not only the presence of water, but the permanence or seasonality of wetland habitats, water depth, the type and amount of cover, and the quality, diversity and availability of food.

In addition to the four species of resident ducks that nest in Florida during spring and summer (mottled, wood, fulvous whistling, and black-bellied whistling ducks), the state offers refuge to more than 15 species of migratory waterfowl during fall and winter. These birds are attracted by Florida's impressive network of depression marshes, basin marshes,

prairies, sloughs, impoundments, natural lakes, and riverine and coastal wetland habitats.

### Waterfowl Habitats

Resident and migratory waterfowl must often visit a variety of wetland habitats across the landscape to meet their daily energy needs and fulfill seasonal requirements for brood rearing, molting or migration. Shallow water marsh, prairie habitats, and wetlands with exposed mudflats, are generally favored

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Wetland with a balanced ratio of open water and emergent vegetation attract the greatest number and diversity of wetland birds. Photo by Peter Diamond.



Shallow water emergent marshes are desirable foraging habitats for waterfowl and wading birds, such as these black-necked stilts.  
Photo by Peter Diamond.

by dabbling ducks, including teal, mottled ducks, and whistling ducks. Larger and deeper bodies of water, such as rivers, lakes and coastal waterways, are preferred by diving ducks like redhead, scaup and ring-necked ducks. Other ducks, such as wood ducks, will use all the above habitats, as well as forested wetlands like cypress swamps.

The depth and permanence of water within a wetland not only influences the types of plants that grow in a particular habitat, but also the variety and availability of preferred waterfowl foods. A single pond or isolated marsh rarely has all the resources that ducks need. But a network or grouping of nearby wetlands with good structure and a diverse array of food types can promote brood survival and ensure healthy body condition for migrating.

### Waterfowl Diets

Waterfowl diets typically change with the seasons and with a bird's individual nutritional needs. From fall through early spring, the seeds, leaves and tubers of wetland plants are essential for supplying waterfowl with energy-rich carbohydrates. Shallow water emergent marsh habitat is often preferred by

dabbling ducks, such as teal and mottled ducks. The most productive marshes for attracting migratory waterfowl are those that are only flooded seasonally, usually mid-summer through winter, and experience an ecological disturbance event such as fire or cattle grazing during the dry periods. This method is often referred to as moist-soil management and has a proven track record of success, although it can be expensive and time consuming. Preferred wetlands plants in this habitat type are annual seed producing plants such as smartweed (*Persicaria* spp.), wild millets (*Echinochloa* spp.) and panic grasses (*Panicum* spp.).

Ringed-necked ducks and wood ducks typically use slightly deeper water "floating-leaved" marsh habitats dominated by waterlilies (e.g., *Brasenia*, *Nuphar* and *Nymphaea* spp.). These diverse marshes offer many food sources in addition to the waterlily seeds, such as sawgrass (*Cladium jamaicense*), buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) and even acorns from oaks around the perimeter of the wetland. However, the best natural plants for attracting and feeding a diversity of waterfowl in any persistently flooded wetland type are submersed aquatic vegetation species (SAV). The most attractive are eelgrass (*Vallisneria americana*),

stoneworts (*Chara* spp.) and naiad (*Najas* spp.). In these deeper water habitats, there are often limited options for active management. In almost all cases, allowing for the maximum water level fluctuation in any waterbody will improve productivity.

Waterfowl may also forage in fallow agricultural fields in fall and winter for waste grain such as corn and milo, both of which are considered a high-energy food source. It's important to be aware that the overall energy value of these and other grain and cereal crops, including wheat, rice, barley, oats, sorghum, rye, millet and buckwheat, decline at different rates when the seeds are exposed to water or are submerged under water. Corn and rice hold up fairly well in waterlogged soil, but soybeans break down rather quickly.

During breeding and molting periods, ducks will use habitats with a greater amount of thick emergent vegetation for predation avoidance, but also require a more diverse and balanced diet. Important sources of protein at these times include aquatic insects, snails, crayfish, and even small fish and frogs. Ducklings especially require high-protein diets during their first few weeks of life, consuming ample

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amounts of wetland-associated insects and other aquatic organisms. Additionally, wood duck nest-box programs can increase local abundance of this species. Wood ducks readily accept manmade nest boxes in place of natural cavities. Information is available on how to build waterfowl nest boxes is available online from FWC, <https://myfwc.com/media/3187/wood-duck-box.pdf> and Ducks Unlimited, <https://www.ducks.org/conservation/waterfowl-research-science/wood-duck-boxes>

### Tips for Attracting Waterfowl

Waterfowl are highly mobile, discerning and wary birds. The mere presence of water and a few wetland plants isn't enough to attract a group of ducks or even a single duck. These savvy birds know what home looks like when they see it from the air and what wetland habitats feel right. Dabbling ducks can assess foraging opportunities and habitat suitability often with just a single fly-over or with several fly-bys. Once waterfowl are using an area, they will often attract others.

Wetlands that attract the greatest number and diversity of wetland birds typically have a balanced or nearly equal ratio of open water and emergent vegetation. Emergent aquatic plants are rooted in the ground and grow above the water's surface. This vegetative cover is

important for waterfowl throughout the year, providing adults and ducklings with a place to rest and relax, and offering shelter and security from predators and weather extremities.

The type of cover that ducks prefer may vary according to the season, but waterfowl generally prefer quiet habitats. Disturbances that cause birds to flush and take to the air tend to make ducks wary and skittish. When in proximity of ducks, be cognizant of changes in their behavior to avoid flushing behavior. Typically, vehicle traffic is less disturbing than a person walking or riding a bike. To view ducks for photography or close observation, setting up a blind can reduce the likelihood of disturbance. Frequent disturbances, no matter how attractive or desirable the habitat, typically results in reduced usage by waterfowl. Designating areas as sanctuaries where human activities are limited should help to keep waterfowl using local wetlands.

Across the state and along waterfowl migration routes, wetland habitats are under constant pressure – losing ground and connectivity to changing land uses, alterations in wetland hydrology, impacts from invasive plants that negatively affect the integrity and quality of habitats, and incremental climatic changes that influence temperatures, weather patterns and storm severity.

### Wetland Construction

When constructing wetlands or undertaking wetland restoration projects, the water depth in at least one-third of the planned area should be no more than 24 inches deep. The outer perimeter of a wetland or pond should also have a shallow and gently sloping shoreline area. A 10:1 slope, where water is one foot deep at a distance of up to 10 feet from the shore, is ideal. This area, typically referred to as the littoral zone, supports both submerged and emergent aquatic plants and is desirable habitat for fish, frogs and aquatic insects. Wading birds and waterfowl are attracted to these areas not only for the diversity of food items but also for the protective cover provided by leafy aquatic plants.

### Get Assistance

For landowners looking to increase habitat for waterfowl, check out the Wildlife and Habitat Assistance section online at <https://myfwc.com/lap> or schedule a visit by contacting the Landowner Assistance Biologist at the nearest FWC Regional Office. Technical assistance is also available through private conservation groups such as Ducks Unlimited and regional land trusts. Cost-share assistance and information regarding conservation easements is available from the Natural Resources Conservation Service.



(L) Seasonally inundated wetlands that experience periodic dry-season disturbance are some of the most productive habitats for wading birds and migratory waterfowl. Photo By: Peter Diamond. (R) Mottled ducks are highly mobile, discerning, and wary birds. FWC photo by Ron Bielefeld.

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## USDA Farm Service Agency Accepting New or Modified Proposals for State Acres Wildlife Enhancement Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is welcoming new and modified proposals from conservation partners for the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) initiative, a part of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) focused on effectively managing wildlife habitat. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has expanded available practices under this initiative in response to feedback from partners.

Through SAFE, producers and landowners restore vital habitat in alignment with high-priority state wildlife conservation

goals. Specifically, landowners establish wetlands, grasses, and trees. These practices are designed to enhance important wildlife populations by creating critical habitat and food sources. They also protect soil and water health by working as a barrier to sediment and nutrient run-off before they reach waterways.

FSA is adding two new practices with the assistance of its sister agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). NRCS conservationists will provide CRP participants with conservation planning assistance, which will now include

managing for early successional habitat cover establishment or management, and wildlife habitat planting. These additional eligible practices will enable SAFE partners to better target a wide variety of wildlife species, such as the Northern bobwhite quail and other species.

New or modified proposals for SAFE projects are to be submitted to USDA FSA State Offices in June 2022. Find contacts at your USDA Service Center at <https://www.farmers.gov/working-with-us>



A hawk resting high up in a tree looking around at its surroundings. The premier value of Florida's wildlife and their habitats centers on their integral role in maintaining the functioning of the state's ecosystems, providing healthy environment for all living organisms, including humans. Photo by UF\IFAS Thomas Wright.

## Don't miss out on news and events!

Sign up for the regular Florida Land Steward email updates! Send an email to [cdemers@ufl.edu](mailto:cdemers@ufl.edu) to be added to the listserv. Email updates are sent once a week or every other week and include the latest calendar of workshops, tours, webinars, and other events; a link to the current issue of this quarterly newsletter; updates on cost-share and other assistance programs, opportunities, and resources; and other stewardship related news and information.

All the latest news and events are online at the new UF/IFAS Florida Land Steward Program web site: <https://programs.ifas.ufl.edu/florida-land-steward/>

# TIMBER PRICE UPDATE

The timber price 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.

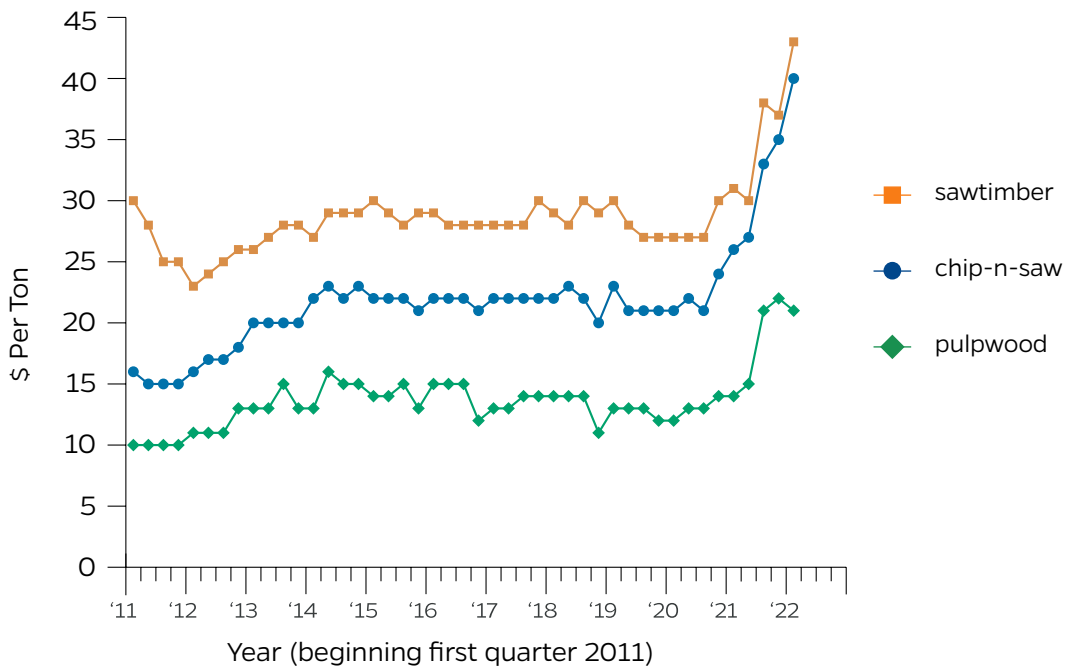
Average stumpage prices for the three major products in Florida, as reported in the **1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2022** Timber Mart-South report were:

Florida Stumpage Prices	
<b>Pine pulpwood:</b>	\$21/ton, ↓ slightly from 4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr. 2021
<b>Pine C-N-S:</b>	\$40/ton, ↑
<b>Pine sawtimber:</b>	\$43/ton, ↑

## Trend Report

Average pine stumpage prices in Florida continued their rally into 2022. Steady demand and constrained wood supplies caused by supply chain issues and wet conditions in some areas have boosted stumpage prices even higher this quarter. The average price of pine chip-n-saw has increased steadily for the sixth consecutive quarter in Florida, holding its place remarkably close to that of pine sawtimber. Housing starts and other indicators of wood product markets continue to hold strong into 2022.

**Average Pine Stumpage Prices for Florida (\$/Ton)**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Qtr 2011 through 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr 2022**



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 LANDOWNERS

More information about certification in these programs is available at:

<https://www.fdacs.gov/Forest-Wildfire/For-Landowners/Programs-for-Landowners/Forest-Stewardship-Program>

<https://www.treefarmssystem.org/florida>

<https://myfwc.com/lap>

These landowners have achieved certification in the Tree Farm, Forest Stewardship, and/or Wildlife Habitat Recognition Program and demonstrate excellent stewardship of their land resources.



Dixie Hollins (L) with Ginger Feagle, Citrus County



Ernest and Kay Ziemke, Escambia County



George Everett (L) with Brent Saulsbury, Volusia County



Marcella D'Antuono (R) with Richard Larsen, Charlotte County



Nancy and Phillip Baxley, Jackson County

### Upcoming Events

Date	Event, Location, Contact
May 11	<p><b>Becoming a Farmer? Part II: What Resources are Available? Online Workshop.</b> 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. ET. Provided by UF/IFAS Extension Sarasota County. Join Extension Agriculture Agent Rod Greder for an in-depth informative online event designed to get you started on the path to successful farming. This 120-minute class, free to the public, will help you better understand the array of helpful resources available to growers/producers. <i>Details and registration at: <a href="https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/becoming-a-farmer-118329">https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/becoming-a-farmer-118329</a></i></p>
May 12	<p><b>Six Rivers Cisma Meeting – Blackwater State Forest.</b> 9:00 am CT at Bear Lake Pavilion, Blackwater State Forest, 2650 Bear Lake Road, Milton FL. Six Rivers Cisma Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area) is an organization of resource professionals and stakeholders who are interested in managing invasive species. The Six Rivers area covers Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Holmes, and Washington counties. The meeting is for land/resource managers, master gardeners, private landowners, and concerned citizens. <i>Details and registration at: <a href="https://www.eventbrite.com/e/six-rivers-cisma-annual-meeting-2022-registration-325104204427">https://www.eventbrite.com/e/six-rivers-cisma-annual-meeting-2022-registration-325104204427</a></i></p>
May 19	<p><b>Forest Stewardship Workshop, Taylor County.</b> 8:00 am to 2:00 pm ET, UF/IFAS Taylor County Extension, Forest Capital Hall, 203 Forest Park Dr., Perry, FL 32348. Provided by UF/IFAS Extension Taylor County, Florida Land Steward Program, and Florida Forest Service. Join us for some introductory forest management information and networking with the statewide and local people who can provide assistance and resources. Learn about choosing the right pine for your property and objectives, Florida Forest Service assistance and resources, and landscaping with fire in mind as we get into the summer fire season. \$10/person covers lunch and materials. <i>Details and registration at: <a href="https://fls-workshop051922.eventbrite.com/">https://fls-workshop051922.eventbrite.com/</a></i></p>
Aug 25	<p><b>Invasive Species Workshop, Okaloosa County.</b> 9:00 am to 3:00 pm CT, UF/IFAS Extension Okaloosa County, 3098 Airport Rd, Crestview, FL 32539. Provided by Six Rivers Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area and Florida Land Steward Program. Topics will include cogongrass control, getting assistance, early detection strategies, and more. \$10 covers lunch and materials. <i>Contact Chris Demers for information, <a href="mailto:cdemers@ufl.edu">cdemers@ufl.edu</a>, (352) 846-2375.</i></p>

**More events, webinar recordings, news, and information can be found at [programs.ifas.ufl.edu/florida-land-steward](http://programs.ifas.ufl.edu/florida-land-steward)**

The Florida Land Steward Newsletter is joint project of the UF/IFAS Extension, Florida Forest Service, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission, US Fish & Wildlife Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Florida Tree Farm Program:

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