

STATE FOREST SPOTLIGHT

Crooked River

The predominant feature of the forest is the Withlacoochee River, deriving its name from the Indian word meaning “crooked river.” The river has been designated an Outstanding Florida Waterway and follows a course that meanders 18 miles through a variety of natural communities on the State Forest. While the Richloom Tract contains a portion of the headwaters of this river, it also flows through or by the boundaries of the Croom, Jumper Creek and Two Mile Prairie Tracts.

The Citrus Tract includes one of the largest contiguous acreages of sandhill plant communities found in Florida. This tract supports a thriving population of red-cockaded woodpecker. In 2011, this area was identified as a Globally Important Birding Area by the Audubon Society.

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 Withlacoochee State Forest

- Entrance/User Fees are required in designated areas. Annual Day Use Entrance Passes and Use Permits (required for any organized group activity) may be obtained at the Recreation/Visitors Center.
- For camping reservations go online to www.FloridaStateForests.ReserveAmerica.com or call the Reserve America at 877-879-3859.
- Pets are NOT allowed in certain areas of the forest. Where permitted, pets must be confined on a leash no more than 10ft in length.
- Use trash receptacles or take trash with you when you leave.
- Swim at your own risk. Water quality may vary. Rope swings and diving from trees, stream banks and bridges are prohibited.
- With the exception of the CMA (Croom Motorcycle Area), OHVs/Motorcycles, ATVs and other unlicensed vehicles are not allowed on the forest.
- Registered motor vehicles are allowed on designated open roads only. Do not make new roads or trails. Beware of changing road conditions.
- Hiking, biking and horseback riding are welcome on open roads and trails designated for their use.
- All horses require proof of current negative Coggins test results.
- Hunting requires a license, permit and is allowed only in designated areas during appropriate seasons. We encourage all visitors to check the Wildlife Management Area regulations and hunting season dates before visiting the forest. For further information visit: www.MyFWC.com.

For more information, visit:

www.FloridaForestService.com

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Florida Forest Service

Withlacoochee State Forest



Florida Department of
Agriculture and Consumer Services

History

The Withlacoochee State Forest was formerly a land-use project acquired by the federal government through the Resettlement Administration during 1936-1939. The lands were managed by the Soil Conservation Service from 1939-1954. In 1954, management responsibility for the Withlacoochee Land Use Project was transferred to the U.S. Forest Service. The Florida Forest Service became the primary land manager after the execution of a lease-purchase agreement with the U.S. Forest Service in 1958. The deed for the property was transferred to the State of Florida in 1983 and the Florida Forest Service continues to manage the property today.

Additional land purchases have been made using funds from the Environmentally Endangered Lands, the Conservation and Recreation Lands, the Preservation 2000, and the Florida Forever Land acquisition programs. Purchases and donations through 2012 have increased the size of the forest to 159,625 acres.

Forestry

The Florida Forest Service consists of dedicated employees with the mission to protect and manage the forest resources of Florida, ensuring that they are available for future generations. The Florida Forest Service manages more than 1 million acres of state forests for multiple public uses including timber, recreation and wildlife habitat.

Forest management activities, such as timber harvesting and reforestation, are conducted primarily in the mesic flatwoods and sandhill communities of Withlacoochee State Forest. These activities include harvesting off-site pine species for restoration purposes, thinning both planted and natural stands of pines to maintain forest health, and tree planting when needed for reforestation, usually after catastrophic wildfire. Prescribed fire is used in fire-dependent plant communities to enhance wildlife and listed species habitat, reduce the buildup of fuels and to restore, maintain, and protect their ecological processes. Invasive exotic plants, such as cogon grass, are controlled to prevent spread to other parts of the forest.



Withlacoochee River



Forest management



Rider at Croom Motorcycle Area

**For more information contact:
Withlacoochee State Forest
15003 Broad Street, Brooksville, FL 34601
Phone (352) 797-4140
www.FloridaForestService.com**

Natural Resources

Withlacoochee State Forest (WSF) is made up of seven non-contiguous tracts spanning five counties. Each of these unique tracts provides native plants and wildlife, refuge from development. These large acreages of natural land also provide clean areas for aquifer recharge. A distinctive character of WSF is its ecological diversity, which includes almost all of the natural plant communities found in Central Florida. Each of these 18 different plant communities supports many different native plants and animals.

Withlacoochee State Forest's natural communities are home to many of Florida's rare and endangered plants and animals, including the Red-cockaded woodpecker, Florida Scrub-jay and Cooley's Water-willow, to name just a few. More than 67,300 acres of sandhill, a rapidly disappearing ecosystem in the Southeast United States, is located on WSF. The forest is also a wintering area for many migratory birds. In addition, the state forest provides timber, a renewable resource, to contribute to Florida's economy.

Recreation

Hiking, biking, equestrian and canoe trails exhibit unique characteristics and offer a variety of fauna/flora for the observant visitor. Novice to avid birdwatchers will delight in the exceptional opportunities available for sighting common and rare birds. Some of the better known trails on the forest include the Withlacoochee State Trail, Great Florida Birding Trail and the Florida State Canoe Trail. The WSF also has many of its own trails that are part of Trailwalker and Trailtrotter Programs.

Off-highway vehicle (OHV) and all terrain vehicle (ATV) enthusiasts will find adventure around every turn at the Croom Motorcycle Area.

Fishing and hunting in state forest are regulated by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission in cooperation with the Florida Forest Service, according to information published on their website (MyFWC.com) including seasons, license requirements and quantity limits.