

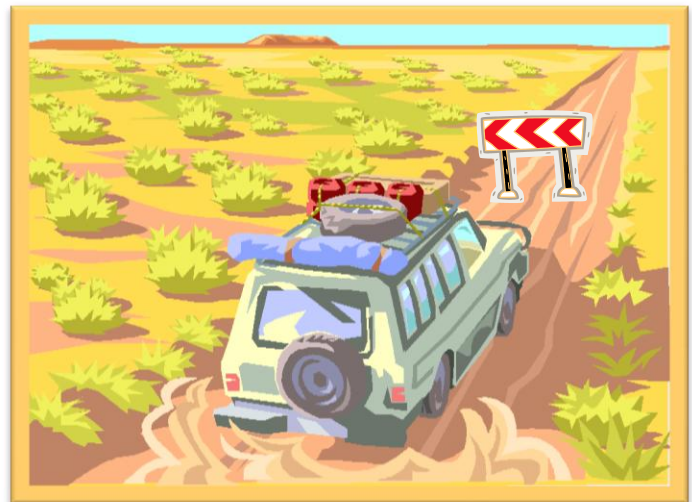


Legacy Roads and Trails Remediation Initiative (LRR) at the Ocala National Forest

By: Miki Kristina Gilloon, U.S. Forest Service-National Forests in Florida and edited by Melissa Kreye, CFEOR Coordinator

As part of the Legacy Roads and Trails Remediation Initiative (LRR) created by Congress in 2008, the National Forests in Florida and its partner organizations are working to give back to nature thousands of miles of unneeded and non-designated roads and routes on the Ocala National Forest to protect and restore community water sources, ecosystems and wildlife habitats.

“The biggest step we’re taking is restoration – it’s all about restoring habitat areas that have been destroyed or denuded,” said Rick Lint, District Ranger on the Ocala National Forest. “Everything left over is a scar on the landscape that needs to be rehabilitated and restored and what we’re doing is planting it back.” Spawned by environmental problems from user-created routes, excess roads, and old fire lines that were never closed, the LRR dedicated nearly \$40 million to the nation’s national forests to decommission old roads and user-created routes, perform critical road repair and remove barriers threatening species and natural habitats.



Remnants of more than 2,200 miles of unneeded and non-designated roads – some user-created and others that once served a purpose – still exist today in the Ocala. About 1,800 miles of such roads span the Apalachicola and Osceola National Forests.

“We had over 4,000 miles of travelable routes in a 600 square-mile forest -- that’s way too much and too busy,” Lint said. “Inroads that offshoot from other roads have the potential for people to get off the path and do illegal things; removing them decreases the amount of exposure to harm the environment.”

Community members were hesitant about the Legacy Roads and Trails at first, said Lint, because it involved removing these routes. After engaging others on prioritizing projects such as protecting watersheds and restoring water resources, organizations such as the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, National Wild Turkey Federation, and Sierra Club came on board to support. U.S. Forest Service wildlife biologists like Carrie Sekerak are taking the lead to implement strategies for removing unneeded routes that add to erosion and sediment runoff.

“Watersheds are a primary interest of the agency,” Sekerak said, emphasizing that the U.S. Forest Service has an obligation to take care of unneeded roads and routes necessary to protect water quality.

Since the LRRF funding was allocated, the Ocala National Forest received \$150,000 in 2008 to successfully protect the St. John's watershed in the Billie's Bay and Astor areas. About 40 miles of user-created roads were decommissioned for habitat restoration: 6,000 trees and shrubs were planted and 90 acres in 60 areas were revitalized with groundcover to create hunting enhancements.

A \$300,000 allocation in 2009 was invested into two ongoing projects: protecting the wetlands and watershed near Lake Ocklawaha area and reducing erosion at Alexander Springs Run.

Sekerak has worked in the Ocala for the past 11 years, and while there are successes, she also runs across challenges. Most disappointing are users re-opening blocked roads to create new illegal routes or driving over restored areas.

The U.S. Forest Service has put up signs, blocked them with trees and even planted live vegetation to prep areas for restoration. "Restoring Legacy Roads back to forests and prairies and conducting associated projects like watershed restoration is one of the most significant actions we can take toward rebuilding the ecological integrity of the Ocala National Forest," Sererak said. Challenges remain, but Sekerak doesn't let them stop her passion for restoring the forest.

To learn more contact Denise Raines at drains@fs.fed.us or go to <http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/florida/ocala>



U.S. Forest Service employees plant trees in an area once used by motorized vehicles on the Ocala National Forest. (Photo by Carrie Sekerak)

Announcements

CFEOR provides \$20,000 funding for innovative groundcover restoration research!

CFEOR is offering a \$20,000 grant to fund innovative research to restore native ground cover in prairie and/or forested Florida ecosystems. There is interest in implementing groundcover restoration in Florida's upland and wetland ecosystems for many reasons such as to reverse biodiversity loss, augment wildlife habitat, restore ecosystem services, enhance aesthetic value and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire. Continuous research is needed to determine successful restoration methodologies.

This grant opportunity is open to any UF faculty member. The one time grant can be used to initiate, leverage or expand a current ground cover restoration research project. To learn more read the [Groundcover Restoration RFP](#), visit the [CFEOR Project Proposal Program](#) page at the [CFEOR website](#) or contact Melissa Kreye at mkreye@ufl.edu.



CFEOR Outreach Committee wins the 2009 US Forest Service Regional Forester Honor Award in the category of Technology Transfer!



The USFS Regional Forester Honor Award was created to recognize the employees, partners and volunteers of the Southern Region that together restore and protect natural ecosystems and respond to citizens needs. Out of 56 nominations the CFEOR Outreach Committee won in the category of technology transfer for our efforts in transferring knowledge learned to land managers. These efforts include the CFEOR website, the *Updates* newsletter and hosting workshops to disseminate knowledge needed to conserve and manage Florida's forests as healthy, working ecosystems. Representatives from the CFEOR Outreach Committee will attend the awards ceremony on Nov. 18, 2009 at the Grand Hyatt in Atlanta, GA.

Recent Research Findings

Responses of small rodents to habitat restoration and management for the imperiled Florida Scrub-Jay.

Suazo, Alexis A., John E. Fauth, James D. Roth, Christopher L. Parkinson, I. Jack Stout. 2009. *Biological Conservation*, 142 pages: 2322-2328.

Debate about the relative merits of single-species management versus more comprehensive approaches has intensified in recent years. In east-central Florida, USA, land managers use prescribed burns and mechanical cutting to manage and restore scrub habitat to benefit the imperiled Florida Scrub-Jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*). However, these land-management techniques may affect non-target taxa, especially the threatened southeastern beach mouse (*Peromyscus polionotus niveiventris*). We evaluated the collateral effects of single-species land management by trapping *P. p. niveiventris* and other small rodents in eighteen land-management compartments at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Florida during 2004–2005. Compartments were managed using either prescribed burns ($N = 5$), mechanical cutting ($N = 6$), checkerboarding (cut and uncut lanes alternating and overlapping, followed by a prescribed burn, $N = 4$) or left unburned and uncut for >50 year ($N = 3$). *P. p. niveiventris* was significantly more abundant in compartments managed with prescribed burns (mean \pm SE: 4.2 ± 0.7 individuals/transect) than those managed with cutting alone (1.0 ± 0.3) or not managed for >50 y (0.2 ± 0.1 individuals/transect). In contrast, the cotton mouse (*Peromyscus gossypinus*) tended to be more abundant in compartments managed with mechanical cutting alone (2.6 ± 0.4 individuals/transect) compared to the other three management strategies (prescribed burns; 1.5 ± 0.4 ; checkerboarding, 1.1 ± 0.3 ; not managed, 1.6 ± 0.4 individuals/transect) but these differences were not statistically significant. Abundances of *P. p. niveiventris* and Florida Scrub-Jay breeding groups were positively correlated ($r = 0.655$), suggesting that both listed species benefit from similar management techniques. Thus, the mosaic of burned and cut patches used to improve habitat for the Florida Scrub-Jay also benefits an endemic, non-target species. Single-species management may benefit multiple species when restoration improves their shared habitat, which in this case is an endangered, fire-dependent ecosystem: Florida scrub.

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Upcoming Events

- Natural Areas Training Academy: Managing for Diversity Across Florida's Unique Landscapes**
 Nov. 17-19, 2009. This course is designed to introduce students to the rich biological diversity of Florida and to ensure that students have an understanding of the strategies used to protect biodiversity in Florida. See <http://nata.snre.ufl.edu/diverse.htm> for details.
- 4th International Fire Ecology & Management Congress: Fire as a Global Process**
 Nov. 30-Dec. 4, 2009. Hosted by the Association for Fire Ecology. Go to <http://www.fireecology.net/Congress09/Home> .
- Natural Areas Training Academy: Conservation Site Assessment and Planning**
 Dec. 8-10, 2009. The purpose of this workshop is to introduce the participant to assessment and planning techniques being successfully used in Florida. Ordway-Swisher Biological Station, Melrose, Florida. Go to <http://nata.snre.ufl.edu/>.
- The Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute: Extension Education in Natural Resource Dispute Resolution and Collaborative Decision-making**
 January 27, 2009 at 1:55 - 2:45 PM. Dr. Laila Racevskis, UF Department of Food and Resource Economics. 112 Newins-Ziegler Hall.
- Sustainable use and depletion of natural resources: lessons for the energy system**
 Feb. 24, 2009 at 1:55 - 2:45 PM. Dr. Stephen Humphrey, UF School of Natural Resources and Environment. 112 Newins-Ziegler Hall.
- Forest Stewardship Property Tour at Sauriwa Conservation Area, Property of Mike Adams, 2009 Forest Stewardship Landowner of the Year, St. Johns County.**
 Feb. 25, 2009. Call the St. Johns County Extension Office at (904) 209-0430 to register.

CFEOR Mission: To develop and disseminate knowledge needed to conserve and manage Florida's forest as a healthy, working ecosystem that provides social, ecological and economic benefits on a sustainable basis.

CFEOR Administration

Charlie Houser, Suwannee River Water Management District, Steering Committee Chair

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