

ITEM 8:

Consider a 10-year update to the Indian Lake State Forest Management Plan (Lease No. 4577).

LOCATION:

Marion County

APPLICANT:

Florida Forest Service (FFS)

STAFF REMARKS:

Background

The Indian Lake State Forest (ILSF) is approximately 4,567 acres of rolling sandhills and old pastures just north of historic Silver Springs in Marion County. The forest is named after Indian Lake, a deep sinkhole lake that drains into the aquifer. This property was acquired in 2007 and 2008 under the Florida Forever program, with additional money from Marion County and assistance from The Nature Conservancy, Silver Springs Working Group, and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). ILSF is just a few miles from the heart of Ocala. While ILSF is dominated by rolling sandhills on a sinkhole-rich karst topography, other natural community types include depression marsh, xeric hammock, and mesic flatwoods.

The primary mission of the FFS is to “protect Florida and its people from the dangers of wildland fire and manage the forest resources through a stewardship ethic to assure they are available for future generations.” Management strategies for WISF center on the multiple-use concept, as defined in sections 589.04(3) and 253.034(2)(a), Florida Statutes (F.S.).

Multiple-use management for ILSF will be accomplished with the following strategies:

- Practice sustainable forest management for improved forest health and efficient generation of revenue in support of state forest management objectives;
- Provide for resource-based outdoor recreation opportunities for multiple interests;
- Restore and manage healthy forests and native ecosystems ensuring the long-term viability of populations and species listed as endangered, threatened or rare, and other components of biological diversity including game and nongame wildlife and plants;
- Protect known archaeological, historical, and cultural resources;
- Restore, maintain, and protect hydrological functions related to water resources and the health of associated wetland and aquatic communities; and
- Provide research and educational opportunities related to natural resource management.

Management Plan Overview

In 2016, the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) completed an inventory and natural community mapping project on ILSF and created current and historic natural community type maps. Ten natural community types are found on ILSF. The predominant natural community types are sandhill and xeric hammock. FNAI also identified five altered landcover types. There are six rare, endangered, or threatened plant and animal species documented on ILSF.

A review of information contained in the Division of Historical Resources Florida Master Site File has determined there are 11 recorded archaeological sites and two historical cemeteries within the

designated area for ILSF. Currently, none of the known sites on ILSF are listed in the National Register of Historic Places and none are eligible.

Recreation opportunities at ILSF include hiking, birdwatching, horseback riding, fishing, picnicking, RV & primitive camping, wildlife viewing, and photography. The lake recreation area trailhead is located on the north side on Indian Lake. The Bear-N-Oak looped hiking trail begins at this trailhead. The equestrian trailhead and trails are on the west side of Baseline Road north of State Road 326. This section of ILSF has the largest acreage needed to provide trail lengths suitable for equestrian users. A third high-use public area on ILSF is the campground. The campground is suitable for RV and / or primitive campers. The fourth existing public site is the State Forest office. The office is located just off State Road 326 and within five miles of the recreation parking areas. This office also serves as a visitor center where visitors can get more information and specific questions answered.

The ILSF participates in a Firewise community program. Communities in wildfire prone areas must work together to be fully prepared for wildfire. A “Fire Adapted Community” incorporates people, buildings, businesses, infrastructure, cultural resources, and natural areas to prepare for the effects of wildfire. The Fire Adapted Community concept serves as an umbrella to the various programs that help communities become more fire adapted. The FFS has implemented the Fire Adapted Community concept for prevention statewide. Specifically, in the area adjacent to or nearby ILSF, efforts will continue to identify communities at risk and to contact their representatives.

The Florida Legislature requires that all land management plans include long and short-term goals. These goals must be measurable objectives, and short-term goals must be achievable within a two-year planning period. Pursuant to section 253.034, F.S., the Division of State Lands began compiling the short-term goals from each land management plan approved since July 1, 2016. The management plan identified objectives under the following short-term goals: Public Access and Recreational Opportunities.

Public Involvement

FFS responds to public involvement through liaison panels, management plan advisory groups, public hearings, and through ongoing direct contact with user groups. The plan was developed with input from the ILSF Management Plan Advisory Group and was reviewed at a public hearing on January 25, 2023. No comments from the public were received.

Surplus Lands

On conservation lands where FFS is the lead manager, FFS assesses and identifies areas for potential surplus land. This consists of an examination of resource and operational management needs, public access and recreational use, and GIS modeling and analysis. The evaluation of WISF by FFS has determined that all portions of the area are being managed and operated for the original purposes of acquisition, therefore, no portion of the ILSF is recommended for potential surplus.

State Land Management Review Team

A Land Management Review (LMR) was conducted in September 2022. The review team found that the property is managed in accordance with the purposes for which it was acquired and the management practices, including public access, are in compliance with the management plan. No recommendations were offered.

The 2022 LMR notes were reviewed as part of developing this plan and the agreed upon changes and recommendations were made to this management plan.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the management plan.

ARC RECOMMENDATION:

☐ **APPROVE**

☐ **APPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS:** _____

☐ **DEFER**

☐ **WITHDRAW**

☐ **NOT APPROVE**

☐ **OTHER:** _____

LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LEAD AGENCY: Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), Florida Forest Service
 COMMON NAME: Indian Lake State Forest
 LOCATION: Marion County
 ACREAGE TOTAL: 4,567.65 acres

Historic Natural Communities*	Approximate Acreage**
Sandhill	4,065
Mesic hammock	147
Mesic flatwoods	131
Baygall	66
Sandhill upland lake	18

Historic Natural Communities*	Approximate Acreage**
Basin swamp	17
Basin marsh	11
Depression marsh	8
Sinkhole	3
Xeric hammock	2

* Table excludes unmapped SJRWMD 102-acre parcel acquired November 2020

** Rounding errors exist

TIITF LEASE AGREEMENT NUMBER: 4577

USE: Single ____ Multiple X

MANAGEMENT AGENCY

Florida DACS, Florida Forest Service
 Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
 St. Johns River Water Management District
 Department of State, Division of Historical Resources

RESPONSIBILITY

General Forest Resource Management
 Wildlife Resources and Laws
 Water Resource Protection and Restoration
 Historical and Archaeological Resource Management

DESIGNATED LAND USE:

Multiple-Use State Forest

SUBLEASES:

None

ENCUMBRANCES:

Existing water monitoring wells and related easements, existing electric supply and related easements, Marion County Parcel #14404-000-00 owned by SJRWMD

TYPES OF ACQUISITION:

Florida Forever and Marion County Funds, St. Johns River Water Management District.

UNIQUE FEATURES:

A deep sinkhole lake occurs on the property that drains into the Floridan Aquifer. A string of hat-rack cypress growing between Indian Lake Prairie and Indian Lake visually captures old Florida.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL / HISTORICAL:

Thirteen (13) known sites

MANAGEMENT NEEDS:

Restoration and maintenance of native ecosystems

ACQUISITION NEEDS:

13,663 Acres of Optimal Management Boundary including remainder of Heather Island / Ocklawaha River Florida Forever project, and portions of Indian Lake Prairie

SURPLUS ACREAGE:

None

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT:

ILSF Liaison Committee, Marion County, Management Plan Advisory Group Public Hearing, State Forest Liaison Committee, Acquisition and Restoration Council - - - - -

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DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE (FOR DIVISION OF STATE LANDS USE ONLY)

ARC Approval Date: _____ TIITF Approval Date: _____

Comments: _____





















