

ITEM 10:

Consider a 10-year update to the Charles H. Bronson State Forest Management Plan (Lease No. 4580).

LOCATION:

Orange and Seminole counties

APPLICANT:

Florida Forest Service (FFS), Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

STAFF REMARKS:

Background

Charles H. Bronson State Forest (CHBSF) is located about 23 miles east of Orlando in southeastern Seminole County and northeastern Orange County, adjacent to and south of the Little Big Econ State Forest (LBESF). The CHBSF is operated out of the LBESF headquarters, which is in Geneva, Florida.

The forest was established on July 1, 2008, by legislative direction and is named after Charles H. Bronson, who served as the ninth Commissioner for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services from 2001 to 2011. Most of the 11,246 acres within the forest boundary was purchased by St Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD), Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (TIITF) (Florida Forever), Orange County and Natural Resource Conservation Service. The TIITF holds fee simple title to the north parcel of the Joshua Creek Tract and the northeast section of the Turkey Creek Tract. SJRWMD holds fee simple title to 50% of the south parcel on Joshua Creek and Orange County owns the other 50% of the parcel. Orange County also owns 100% of parcel 3 on Joshua Creek. NRCS holds fee simple title to the west section of the Turkey Creek Tract. The Clonts Tract is wholly owned by the SJRWMD. An Intergovernmental Management Agreement” assigns management of the SJRWMD parcels to the FFS. Lease No. 4580, between the TIITF and the FFS, provides authority for the FFS to manage the TIITF portion of CHBSF.

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 CHBSF 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 CHBSF 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 CHBSF and created a historic natural community type map. Fifteen natural community types are found on CHBSF. The predominant natural community is hydric hammock. FNAI also identified three altered landcover types. There are 42 endangered or threatened plant and animal species documented on CHBSF.

A review of information contained in the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources, Florida Master Site File has determined there are fourteen recorded archaeological sites and one historical structure found within the designated area for CHBSF.

A variety of recreational opportunities are available on the forest. Recreation activities include picnicking, horseback riding, hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, and wildlife viewing. CHBSF is part of the Florida National Scenic Trail, the FFS Trailwalker Program, and the FFS Trailtrotter Program.

The CHBSF is a participant 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 CHBSF, 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 (ST) goals. These goals must be measurable objectives, and ST goals must be achievable within a two-year planning period. Pursuant to section 253.034, F.S., the Division of State Lands tracks the status of ST goals in each land management plan approved since July 1, 2016. The ST goals from this management plan are included as part of this item.

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 CHBSF Management Plan Advisory Group and was reviewed at a public hearing on March 29, 2021. Discussions at the public meeting included uses such as bicycling, trails, and trailheads.

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 CHBSF 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 CHBSF is recommended for potential surplus.

State Land Management Review Team

A Land Management Review (LMR) was conducted in April 2018. 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. Five consensus recommendations were offered:

- 1) The team recommended the FFS refine the natural communities mapping to capture the sandhill and sand pine scrub communities that are present onsite.
- 2) The team recommended the FFS continue to work with DHR to address erosion issues and long-term protection of known sites that are subject to erosion problems.
- 3) The team recommended the FFS continue to utilize cattle lessees to accomplish desired resource management activities through in-kind service work projects.
- 4) The team recommended the FFS continue to pursue opportunities to acquire remaining outparcels within the Joshua Creek tract and pursue additional local acquisition partners.
- 5) The team recommended the FFS continue pursuing opportunities to acquire citizen science and academic researchers' data on plant and animal species, including a bio-blitz.

The 2018 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:** _____

Charles H. Bronson State Forest

Land Management Plan Short Term Goals

Goal (ST)	Details of Goal	Objective	Details of Objective	Measure
2	Public Access and Recreational Opportunities	2	Evaluate additional public Access and Recreational Opportunities that are compatible with multiple use management.	Number of additional visitor opportunities evaluated.
7	Hydrological Preservation and Restoration	3	Conduct and obtain a site assessment / study to identify potential hydrology restoration needs.	Assessment conducted.

Source: Florida DEP, Office of Environmental Services, Revised Sept_2019_MWE.

LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LEAD AGENCY: Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), Florida Forest Service (FFS)
 COMMON NAME: Charles H. Bronson State Forest (CHBSF)
 LOCATION: Seminole County and Orange County
 ACREAGE TOTAL: 11,246.24 acres

Historic Natural Communities	Approximate Acreage
Hydric Hammock	4,642
Mesic Flatwoods	2,687
Floodplain Marsh	1,735
Wet Flatwoods	809
Blackwater Stream	592
Basin Swamp	162
Basin Marsh	158

Historic Natural Communities	Approximate Acreage
Scrubby Flatwoods	134
Depression Marsh	92
Baygall	88
Sandhill	64
Scrub	37
Mesic Hammock	28
Dome Swamp	18

TIITF LEASE AGREEMENT NUMBERS: 4580

USE: Single Multiple

MANAGEMENT AGENCY

FDACS, 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 & Laws
 Water Resource Protection & Restoration
 Historical & Archaeological Resource Management

DESIGNATED LAND USE: Multiple-Use State Forest

SUBLEASES: None

ENCUMBRANCES: Seminole County, Orange County

TYPE of ACQUISITION: Florida Forever Funds (TIITF and WMD), Natural Resource Conservation Service Funds, Orange County Green Place Program Funds.

UNIQUE FEATURES: The St. Johns River, an American Heritage River, is the longest river in Florida at 310 miles long; four creeks flow through the forest: Turkey Creek, Joshua Creek, Buscombe Creek, and Christmas Creek

ARCHAEOLOGICAL / HISTORICAL: Fifteen (15) known sites

MANAGEMENT NEEDS: Continued restoration and maintenance of native ecosystems and protection of archaeological and historical sites

ACQUISITION NEEDS: Additional acreage located in the Optimal Management Boundary

SURPLUS ACREAGE: None

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT: 2014 and 2018 Land Management Reviews, State Forest Liaison Committee, Management Plan Advisory Group and Public Hearing, Acquisition and Restoration Council, St. Johns River Water Management District Governing Board - - - - -

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

ARC Approval Date: _____ TITF Approval Date: _____

Comments: _____



















