

Hunting season to begin soon on SRWMD lands

Hunting will soon begin on nearly 100,000 acres of Suwannee River Water Management District-owned lands. Deer, hog, turkey and small game hunting is available on limited days from September-March.

Hunting on these lands is managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission as Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs).

The following is a list of areas available for hunting:

- Big Shoals: Hamilton County
- Cypress Creek: Hamilton County
- Holton Creek: Hamilton County
- Little River: Suwannee County
- Troy Springs: Lafayette County
- Twin Rivers: Madison County
- Mallory Swamp: Lafayette County
- Steinhatchee Springs: Lafayette, Dixie and Taylor counties
- Lower Econfina: Taylor County
- Middle Aucilla: Jefferson, Madison and Taylor counties

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- Log Landing: Dixie County
- Devil's Hammock: Levy County
- Santa Fe Swamp: Bradford County

Holton Creek is a mobility impaired hunting area. It is closed to the public during hunt dates, except to persons hiking the Florida Trail.

Persons using WMAs are required to have appropriate licenses, permits and stamps.

For more information contact the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at 386.758.0525 or visit the website at www.myfwc.com.

RIGHT: Mt. Gilead, part of the Middle Aucilla WMA, provides hunting opportunities in Jefferson, Madison and Taylor counties.



Follow the signs ...



... to great recreational opportunities

A boat on a ramp. A horse and rider. A person hiking. These are some of the illustrations that will lead the way to great recreational opportunities on District conservation lands.

The District is working to improve signage on its 160,000 acres of District-owned lands that are open to the public

for hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, picnicking, and other recreational opportunities. Icons detailing approved uses for each tract will be added to existing entrance signs; tracts that currently do not have an entrance sign, will have one installed.

“Since visitors to District lands serve as

their own tour guides, we hope the updates will better accommodate the public in knowing what opportunities are available to them,” said Edwin McCook, District land management specialist.

A list and description of recreational opportunities are available at www.mysuwanneeriver.com/recreation.

THE SMOKE HAS CLEARED

Santa Fe Swamp is on the mend and back in business

Though charred trees and open space are a reminder of the wildfire that swept through the Santa Fe Swamp, new plant growth indicates the area is in recovery.

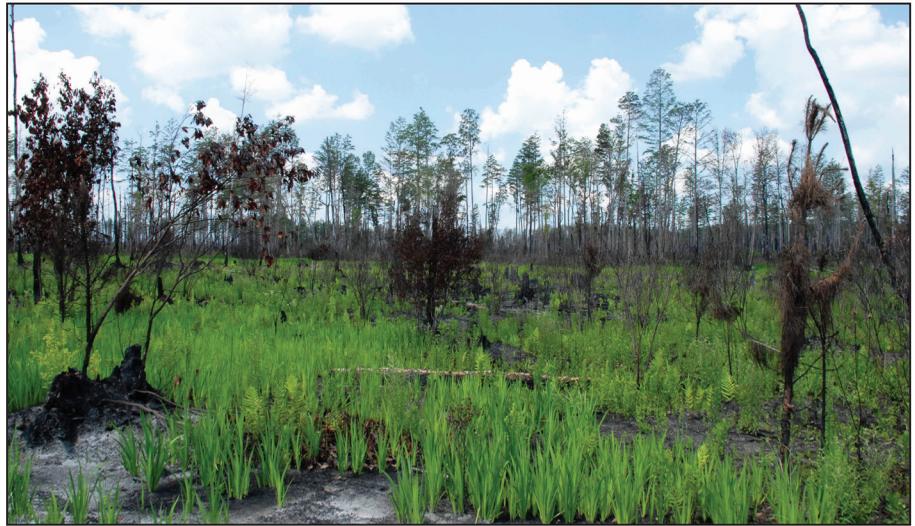
Over the last few weeks, District land managers and workers with Florida Forest Service (FFS) have worked to rehabilitate fire lines and make other repairs to prepare for the District's property within the swamp to reopen. The tract, located in Alachua and Bradford counties, officially reopened to the public August 11.

The District, which owns 5,708 acres within the swamp, closed its portion of the property after lightning sparked a wildfire in early June. The fire was declared out by FFS on July 19.

"Before reopening the tract, we wanted to ensure that the hydrology and public access in recreational areas were restored back to conditions prior to the fire," said Edwin McCook, District land management specialist.

The FFS, formerly the Florida Division of Forestry, worked around the clock to extinguish the fire. Firefighters used aircraft to drop fire retardant and water from the sky and used various equipment to maintain burn lines to contain the fire on the ground.

"The best we can do against a swamp fire is keep it within the perimeter of the



The Santa Fe Swamp in August 2011 after a wildfire swept through most of the area.

swamp and let it burn out," said Kurt Wisner, a spokesperson for FFS.

With the exception of only a few small escapes which were extinguished fairly quickly, fire crews were successful in containing the blaze within the swamp. No personnel were injured and no structures were damaged, said Wisner.

According to GPS measurement of fire lines, 5,679 acres within the swamp were burned. This number is lower than earlier reports because GPS measurement is more

accurate than estimates reported during an incident, said Wisner.

In addition to reopening the swamp, the District has also lifted its ban on camp fires on all District property.

Though the District continues to experience drought conditions, the ban was lifted based on the Keetch-Byram drought index (KBDI), which tracks soil moisture content to evaluate the risk of wildfires. As of mid July those levels on District lands fell within a normal range.

News briefs

Hydrologic Conditions

The District continued to receive below normal rainfall in July, with an average of 5.90 inches District-wide. Scattered but locally intense storms helped keep river levels from falling lower than the record lows seen at some gages in June. Deficits nearing 25 inches persisted in the upper Suwannee and Santa Fe basins.

The District continues to experience drought conditions and a Water Shortage Advisory remains in effect, which calls for all water users to voluntarily eliminate non-essential uses of water.

Prescribed Fire

On August 9 the District's Governing Board approved contracts to perform prescribed fire services for Fiscal Year 2012. The District has targeted 12,000 acres for prescribed burning during the upcoming fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1.

The District uses prescribed fire as a land management tool to restore and maintain natural communities and reduce the risk of wildfire on District lands. Other benefits of controlled burns are wildlife habitat improvement, soil nutrient restoration and aesthetic improvement.

Hunting Opportunities

The District's Governing Board on August 9 voted to add more than 9,000 acres of hunting opportunities in Alachua, Dixie and Gilchrist counties within the Log Landing, Steinhatchee Springs and Santa Fe Swamp Wildlife Management Areas.

The properties are scheduled to open to the public for the 2012-13 hunting season, pending approval of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. For hunting opportunities available this year, see the article on page 1 of this newsletter.