



Figure 1. Five agencies work together to implement the Forest Stewardship Program.

- increase public awareness of the importance of Florida's forestlands; and
- improve the cooperation among natural resource agencies to meet Florida's forest resource conservation and management needs and opportunities.

The goal for the Stewardship Program is to enroll at least 625 landowners owning 425,000 acres over a five-year period. In the first year of the program, over 100 landowners have participated and several others have expressed an interest.

Who is eligible to become a Forest Steward?

Over half of Florida's forestland is owned by non-industrial landowners who receive most of their income from sources other than their forests. Candidates for the program are those landowners who are both interested in and committed to long term multiple-use land management that is economically viable and socially, ecologically and environmentally responsible. In particular Forest Stewards include private landowners who:

- do not presently actively manage their land but would like to develop a management plan according to the stewardship concept;
- are engaged in single-resource management of their land, such as timber production, and are

interested in increasing income opportunities by diversifying their activities; or

- are currently managing their land for multiple resources and deserve recognition.

Any private non-industrial forest landowner with a minimum of 25 acres of forestland who wants to manage the land for its many resources is eligible. If you are a landowner who (1) has not actively managed your forestland in the past, (2) has managed for one resource in the past and now wants to diversify activities on your forestland or (3) has been managing according to the stewardship concept and wants to receive recognition for your effort, becoming a Forest Steward may be for you.

How does a landowner become a Forest Steward?

Landowners may be nominated by resource professionals, agency representatives, fellow landowners, or by their own initiative. First, a forest management plan is developed with help from a team of natural resource professionals (see *Developing a Management Plan*, p. 4). The landowner is enrolled in the program at this point by signing the "Forest Steward Landowner's Creed," which is a pledge to follow and support the stewardship concept. The landowner then receives technical assistance and implements the management plan. After implementation, the forestland is inspected and approved by a Forest Stewardship team. The Landowner then becomes a certified Forest Steward.

Those who enroll in the Florida Forest Stewardship Program have multi-resource management plans developed based on primary and secondary objectives. These objectives are determined by the landowner with the help of any desired professional assistance. One or two primary objectives are chosen from the list of major resources to manage (either timber, wildlife, recreation, grazing, environmental enhancement, or soil and water conservation). The other resources are also provided for in the management plan. To become a Forest Steward, the landowner must meet minimum requirements for the management of each of these objectives (see each individual resource chapter for primary and secondary management requirements). The requirements are minimal and are designed to provide flexibility in maximizing the benefits of stewardship forestry.