



# Recreation Aesthetics and Environmental Enhancement

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## Why manage for recreation?

Most land in Florida is not owned primarily for recreation. Timber, speculation, and a variety of other objectives usually take precedence over recreation when decisions are made to buy and sell land. Recreational opportunities, however, soon become part of many landowner's management plans. If managed properly they can provide direct benefits to the owner through personal and family activities, and indirect benefits to others. Quality hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, and other outdoor recreational activities are desperately needed in Florida as our population continues to grow at one of the fastest rates in the country. Management of your stewardship forest in a manner compatible with outdoor recreation can bring you benefits in addition to those received from other more traditional sources.

## Options for recreation

Recreational use as a primary objective of private forest land provides an opportunity for the landowner to generate income from the land. Where this is the case the management program may include the following:

- identification of desired uses and appropriate management recommendations followed;
- use of the property for some form of recreation;
- creation and active maintenance of recreational facilities as well as forest management to enhance aesthetic and recreational opportunities;
- minimization of environmental impacts from recreational activities;
- in those areas where hunting is identified as a recreational use, a visible effort made to improve the area for that purpose; examples may include wildlife plantings, prescribed burnings, increased ecotone or diversity management, and the development of compatible recreational facilities.

Participating landowners may also wish to manage recreational opportunities as a secondary consideration to other resources. Usually, this involves making improvements for use only by family and invited guests, or, in the case of absentee landowners, by members of a hunting club or other group under a lease agreement. The guidelines in the previous paragraph still apply, although the landowner's program will tend to involve less intensive development of facilities.

Recreational uses must be compatible with the primary management objective. For example, if recreation is a secondary objective with woodland livestock grazing, then recreational use may have to be restricted to compatible activities and users will have to be kept away from animals and grazing areas. In this instance, as with the primary objective, the environmental impact of recreational objectives must be minimized.

## Practices that enhance recreational resources

A variety of recreation options are available to the forest steward. Selection of the most appropriate mix must reflect the nature of the forest tract, location, potential users, environmental implications and the economic and personal objectives of the landowner. Viable options include picnic areas, campsites, equestrian trails, walking and biking trails, fishing sites, group camps, boat docks, and outdoor education areas. On tracts where hunting opportunities are offered on a fee basis, the landowner should have a specific program of habitat management which includes wildlife planting and control of incompatible encroachments. Also, there may be opportunities to identify and interpret historical and archaeological sites as well as other unique ecological or landscape features.

For those who wish to make a reasonable profit on the enterprise, it may be necessary to obtain specialized training in recreation area management, guest relations, marketing, budgeting, and