

fiscal management. It is important to understand that the development of a quality recreation enterprise will require an initial investment, appropriate maintenance and annual reinvestment in specific resource treatments and guest facilities.

It is essential for the landowner to understand the recreation needs and participation trends within the region of the state where the property is located. Development of a viable private recreation enterprise requires knowledge of not only the natural resource base and appropriate resource management practices, such as wildlife habitat management, but also key business, marketing and people management skills. Landowners must understand the recreation potential and experience for which a charge is made, and how to protect not only the resource and people purchasing units of outdoor recreation, but also himself/herself against any liabilities which may arise in conjunction with recreational use. A survey of all safety hazards should be made and, based on the nature of any dangerous situations, appropriate remediation as well as security and warning devices should be installed. If a fee is charged, the owner is not indemnified under the Florida Recreation Use Statute (citation). Depending on the character of the property and the nature of the recreation activities and facilities provided to the paying guest, liability insurance may be needed.

To minimize the adverse impact of outdoor recreation on the environment, the landowner must be knowledgeable of the types of activities that cause the greatest site damage. Undesirable environmental effects include vegetation damage, soil compaction and erosion, water pollution, littering, landscape damage from off-the-road vehicles, man-caused fire and destruction of wildlife habitat. Environmental damage can also occur as a result of careless construction and maintenance. The landowner should seek assistance in preparing an environmental compliance checklist to guide the plan through each step of implementation. This will insure consistency with the guidelines of the stewardship program as well as compliance with all applicable federal, state, county, and municipal environmental statutes and ordinances.

Assessing the success of the recreation management program can be accomplished in terms of both quantitative and qualitative criteria. Through systematic monitoring of the forest ecosystem, as well as the condition of the land and facilities, the stewardship landowner can determine the extent to which the land is responding to specific treatments

and users are responding favorably to the recreational environment and opportunities provided. If the forest tract is operated as a recreation enterprise, then a major assessment criterion will be the extent to which revenues exceed costs to the point where it is possible to not only reinvest in appropriate maintenance and site enhancement but also to realize a respectable return on any funds invested in the recreation enterprise.

Why manage for aesthetics and environmental enhancement?

The visual qualities of the forest landscape make an important contribution not only to Florida's beauty but to the state's economy and tourism industry as well. A blighted forest landscape implies lack of concern for the forest environment. The public will frequently judge the character of a landowner by the appearance of his property. An aesthetically attractive forest is normally a productive, well-managed forest. Most people would not be willing to pay to recreate in a devastated and polluted forest setting. Forest lands which are allowed to deteriorate in this manner often serve as an impetus for citizens' groups to advocate increased regulation of forest management activities.

Enhancing aesthetics is probably the least expensive type of management program to implement, if no obvious damage has been done in the past. With proper planning, landowners can conduct a variety of management practices and still maintain aesthetic values.

On some forest tracts, there may be severely blighted areas such as abandoned mine pits, polluted ponds, log stacking areas or field sawmills, recently burned or highly eroded roads, trails, fire breaks, stream banks or lake shorelines. The landowner can obtain technical assistance from the stewardship team to help in preparing specific site treatments which emphasize visual enhancement. In most instances, the costs of rehabilitating these types of blighted areas are not excessive. Many such areas, when restored or enhanced, have potential for outdoor recreation development or wildlife habitat improvement.

Part of the process of aesthetic and environmental enhancement is to maintain the forest in a clean, well-kept manner. Trash and debris of all kinds, including any non-historic equipment from past timber or mining operations, should be removed. No dump sites or areas where debris has been burned should be visible. Fences should be