



Several lakes, ponds, & prairie are adjacent to FNST

A ROOF OVERHEAD

You should not count on avoiding rain in Florida. The least expensive and lightest-weight protection is provided by thin plastic. This comes either in the form of a tube tent which is suspended from a rope between two trees, or as a 9' x 12' rectangle. This sheet of plastic can be formed into numerous shapes of shelters to provide protection from the rain. However, mosquito netting may also be needed during the summer and fall months. More substantial (but heavier and more expensive) protection is available in lightweight trail tents that may weigh 3-8 pounds for two persons.

SHOES

There are many schools of thought on what type of shoe is best for Florida hiking. Probably the most comfort and best protection are provided by leather boots 7-8 inches high with synthetic rubber soles. However, many hikers are very satisfied with a high-top sneaker or basketball-type shoe. Sneakers are especially good for youngsters whose rapidly growing feet make purchase of a good boot hard to justify. The most important factor is to make sure that the boots are well broken in and fit properly to prevent foot discomfort. At the first sign of sore feet, stop and try to ease the chafing by pulling socks tight or putting mole foam pads over sore spots.

WHAT'S COOKING

Keep cooking equipment and food simple when planning for your backpacking trip. Dehydrated food has progressed a long way, both in taste and variety. Preparation is usually as simple as heating water and adding the contents of the package. Grocery stores carry a wide variety of instant dried food that is easy to prepare such as rice, oatmeal, potatoes, puddings, and soups. There is also a wide range of one-dish meals such as beef stroganoff, and chicken and noodles which are easy to cook, inexpensive, and most importantly, tasty.

Companies that cater to campers offer freeze-dried meats such as pork chops, beef steak, etc., and combinations such as bacon and eggs with pan-fried potatoes. Don't forget instant coffee and tea, cocoa, or bouillon cubes for quick pickup on a cool morning.

Hikers seldom cook at lunchtime since building a fire is a time-consuming chore. Quick snacks like crackers with peanut butter, jelly, or cheese spread plus dried fruit and candy will meet most hikers' needs. Drink plenty of liquids such as instant lemonade. Also hikers carry a bag of mixed high-energy nibble food such as peanuts, dried cereal, raisins, and chocolate candy.

Many backpackers use small, one-burner, gasoline or propane stoves to heat the water for their meal preparations. These stoves often weigh less than two pounds and are much quicker than building a fire. Also, during periods of very high fire danger that sometimes occur during the spring, use of open fires is sometimes prohibited in the Ocala Forest. During the spring, check with the Visitor Center to see if open fires are permitted.

IN CAMP

All your planning, preparation, and perspiration pays off at your campsite. An early arrival will give you time to make camp, prepare dinner, enjoy the evening, and perhaps do some fishing in one of the 60 lakes and ponds along the FNST. Fishing licenses are required for all non-residents and for Florida residents except those over 65 or under 16 years. Non-residents can purchase a 5-day or 14-day fishing license for a nominal fee at a County Judge or Tax Assessor's Office.

The trail passes near 8 recreation areas that were developed for vehicle campers but are also usable by hikers. Fees are charged at Clearwater Lake, Alexander Springs, and Juniper Springs. Camping is prohibited within 200 feet of T rail. During deer hunting season, (From Mid-November to Early January), camping on the Ocala National Forest is restricted to designated sites.

Good drinking water can be picked up at the developed recreation areas. The water from lakes adjacent to the trail can be treated and used for drinking if you camp at other locations. The oldest method is to boil the water vigorously for five minutes. An easier method is to treat the water with chlorine tablets which are available at most drug stores.

All fires must be extinguished before you leave. Let the fire burn down as much as possible. Pour water over the ashes, stir with a stick, and repeat until the ashes are cold to the touch. Then cover with sand.

Firewood can be picked up off the ground anywhere within the forest, "dead and down" material should be used only.

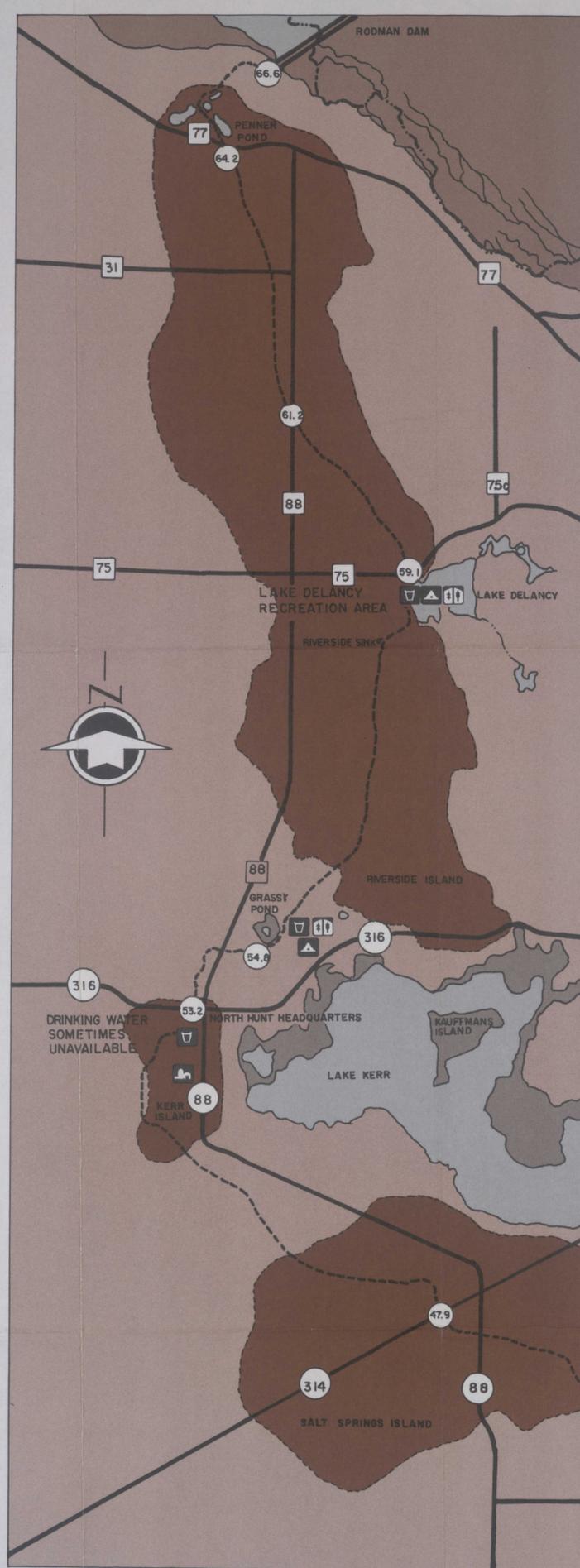
Be careful when building a cooking fire to prevent starting a forest fire; you are liable for any damages. Use fire grills whenever they are provided. In areas without grills, rake back all burnable material for at least 4 feet. Dig a hole for the fire, placing the sand to one side so it can be replaced when you leave. If a previous camper has had a fire please use the same location to protect the site.

A cooking fire can be started easily using small dead limbs about the size of a coathanger that are found on the bottom of young pine trees, or by using dead palmetto leaves. Keep all fires small. Small fires or a good bed of coals are best for cooking and reduce fire hazard. A small lightweight metal grill, propped up on logs or with legs can provide a steady place to set pots.

SANITATION

Garbage and human waste can be deposited in any of the developed recreation areas along the trail. However, when camping in undeveloped areas along the trail, sanitation becomes each individual's responsibility. The goal is to always keep the evidence of people substantially unnoticeable. You should burn all burnable material. Any soft food scraps such as fruit and vegetable peelings should be buried away from the campsite so that they will decompose rapidly. Empty cans, bottles, plastic and aluminum materials should be carried out in your pack to the nearest refuse can.

The proper disposal of human waste is most important. The individual cathole latrine is used by experienced hikers when no developed toilet facilities are available. A 5-6 inch deep hole is dug with a lightweight garden trowel in a screened spot at least a 100 feet from the nearest water. After use, the hole is covered with soil; nature will do the rest in a few days.



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TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR NATIONAL FORESTS



OCALA NATIONAL FOREST INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION

Produced in Partnership with the USDA Forest Service by the Ocala National Forest Interpretive Association, a non-profit, education organization



PLEASE HELP

The Forest Service and thousands of hikers need your help to maintain the enjoyable character of the FNST. Camp at least 200 feet from the trail to maintain its naturalness. Carry out all unburned trash and place in the nearest litter deposit. Use only small fires in a safe location. Prevent damage to live plants in the campsite - Remember that horses and motor vehicles including trail cycles are prohibited on the trail. Treat water from streams and lakes with chlorine tablets before drinking. Protect water sources by locating latrines well away from water and keeping food scraps out of the water. Use caution during hunting season if you are hiking in areas open to hunting.

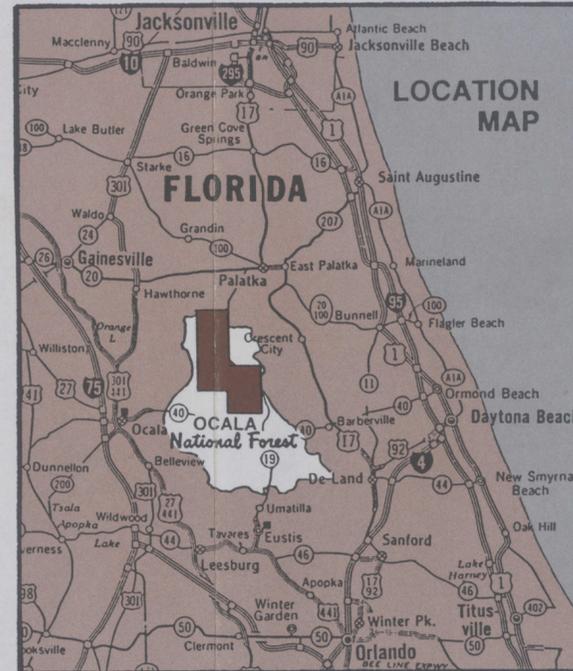
WILDERNESS AREA

The approximately nine miles of trail that passes through the Juniper Prairie Wilderness between Juniper Springs Recreation Area and Forest Road 10 is maintained to lesser standard than found elsewhere in the National Forest. Visitors must assume possible risks, such as falling trees, limbs, lack of vehicle access, animal encounters, bad weather, etc.

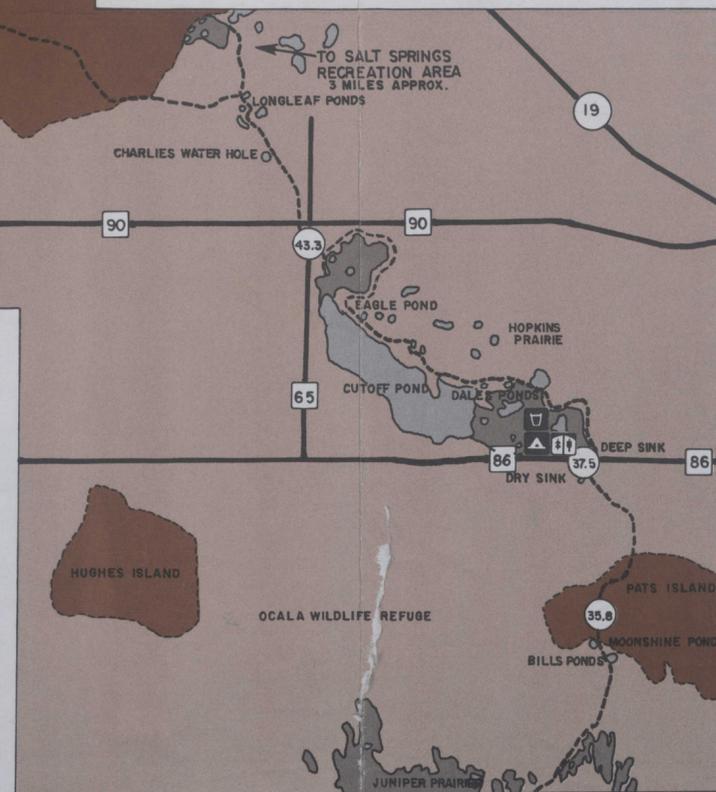
EMERGENCIES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Emergency situations will arise occasionally. It is always a good idea to locate the nearest telephone before you hike. Should someone in your group become sick, seriously injured or lost, call 911.

For information on the Trail north of Juniper Springs, contact the Forest Visitor Center, 10863 East Highway 40, Silver Springs, FL 34488 (904) 625-7470. For information south of Juniper, contact the Forest Pittman Visitor Center, 45621 State Road 19, Altoona, FL 32702 (904) 669-7495. For information on portions of the Florida Trail which are not on National Forest Land, write the Florida Trail Association, P.O. Box 13708, Gainesville, FL 32604.



White Tail Deer are one species of wildlife frequently seen on Ocala National Forest



FNST located in Sand Pine Community