

Improving, Restoring, and Managing Wildlife Habitat in Florida: Sources of Technical Assistance for Rural Landowners¹

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Introduction

In Florida, roughly 50% of the rural land area is held in private ownership and engaged in some form of agriculture or forestry (Florida Statistical Abstract, 1992). Privately owned lands in Florida provide critically important wildlife habitat for many species. Effective management of wildlife habitat on private lands in Florida is essential for maintaining healthy wildlife populations into the future.

Managing for wildlife essentially includes maintaining the natural processes on the land. For example, fire in pine flatwoods and seasonal flooding of wetlands are essential for maintaining plant and wildlife communities that are adapted to these natural processes. However, multiple land uses, invasive non-native species, and other factors may interfere with natural environmental processes. In these cases, active management is needed to maintain or restore healthy and productive wildlife habitat.

Expert advice can be helpful when deciding on specific management actions needed to maintain or restore wildlife habitat. This is especially useful when attempting to benefit wildlife species of special management interest or concern. Landowners are advised to consider the types of habitats that exist on their property and that they are interested

in managing, such as wetlands, pine forests, hardwoods, abandoned pasture, and so forth, to assist them when they begin searching for information.

This document summarizes sources of information from federal, state, and non-governmental organizations that provide technical assistance to rural landowners interested in managing or restoring habitat for wildlife (Table 1). Additional information regarding conservation and management of wildlife habitat in Florida is available on the UF/IFAS Extension Electronic Data Information Source (EDIS). Related documents present information on programs that provide:

1. Financial assistance to private landowners
 - Improving, Restoring, and Managing Natural Resources on Rural Properties in Florida: Sources of Financial Assistance (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FR156>)
2. Technical assistance for homeowners:
 - Improving, Restoring, and Managing Natural Resources in Florida: Sources of Technical Assistance for Urban Homeowners (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/UW212>)

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3. Conservation options (easements, etc.) for private landowners
- Conservation Options for Private Landowners in Florida (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/UW194>)
 - Conservation Easements: Options for Preserving Current Land Uses (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FR149>)
4. Evaluating private lands for conservation
- Evaluating Private Lands for Conservation of Wildlife (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/UW195>)
 - What is in a Natural Resource Management Plan? (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FR126>)

Additional information

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Table 1. Organizations and programs that operate throughout Florida (statewide) to provide technical assistance for management of wildlife habitat and natural resources.

Organization	Contact Information	Comments
Federal		
Department of the Interior	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Partners for Fish & Wildlife: http://www.fws.gov/partners/	Assistance to private landowners to restore wetlands and other wildlife habitat.
	Bureau of Reclamation: http://www.usbr.gov/	Financing, in-kind services, and educational programs for on-farm water management.
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS): http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs	NRCS's natural resources conservation programs help people reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and reduce damages caused by floods and other natural disasters.
	Farm Service Agency: http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=landing	Technical and financial assistance to address soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on farms and ranches.
State		
University of Florida/IFAS	UF/IFAS Extension Electronic Data Information Source: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/	Searchable database for technical information on many topics related to management of natural resources.
UF/IFAS Extension	UF/IFAS Extension Offices: http://extension.ifas.ufl.edu	Provide technical assistance and conduct public workshops. Services vary by county and statewide programs.
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	Landowner Assistance Program: http://www.myfwc.com/lap Landowner Incentive Program: http://myfwc.com/conservation/special-initiatives/lap/	Financial and technical assistance for landowners to manage, enhance, or restore habitats to benefit species at risk.
Florida Division of Forestry	Forest Stewardship Program (FSP): http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Florida-Forest-Service/For-Landowners/Programs/Forest-Stewardship-Program UF/IFAS FSP website: http://www.sfrc.ufl.edu/forest_stewardship	Technical assistance and educational programs through cooperation with UF/IFAS, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and other organizations.
Florida Land Steward	http://floridalandsteward.org/	Florida Land Steward is a partnership of agencies and organizations with landowner outreach as part of their mission. Florida Land Steward is a portal to the partners' web resources and is divided into sections dealing with planning for the future of your land, knowing your land, working your land, and protecting your land.
Water Management Districts	South Florida Water Management District, Water Savings Initiative Program: http://www.sfwmd.gov/watersip	Technical assistance to implement water-efficiency measures that reduce water use demands and promote water conservation.
	Southwest Florida Water Management District, Facilitating Agricultural Resource Management Systems (FARMS): http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/business/farms/	Incentives to farmers to install and maintain irrigation best management practices (BMPs) to the agricultural community within "water use caution areas" (WUCA).
	Suwannee River Water Management District, Private Landowner Initiative Program: http://www.srwmd.state.fl.us/	Assistance to private landowners to develop and implement land management plans that enhance, improve, or restore fish and wildlife habitat.

Organization	Contact Information	Comments
Non-governmental		
American Forest Foundation	American Tree Farm System: https://www.forestfoundation.org/american-tree-farm-system	Directs forestland owners to AFF volunteer foresters, conservation groups, land trusts, and natural resource professionals who can provide assistance in developing forest conservation and wildlife management plans to promote wildlife habitat improvement, watershed protection, and forest health.
National Wild Turkey Federation	http://www.nwtf.org/conservation/wild-turkey-management.html	Provides educational resources, land management tips, North American wild turkey management plan, regional habitat programs, and wildlife bulletins
Privatelands.org	http://www.privatelands.org/	Provides landowners access to conservation and profit improvement information.