

Management Recommendations - 2014

This is a living document that must be reviewed and updated regularly. Updates to species inventories are on-going. An annual review of the document is recommended. Recommendations will follow the best natural areas management practices for the purpose of encouraging biodiversity.

Continued implementation and annual review of the prescribed burn plan is essential to maintaining the biodiversity and natural condition of the pinelands in and adjacent to the Sawmill Slough Preserve. Burns into the edges of low-lying, moist areas are important, also, for natural biodiversity. Natural habitat descriptions by the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) include discussion of fire frequency. In dry pinelands, natural fires may occur as frequently as every three to five years. At the other end of the spectrum, wet forests may burn once per century or less frequently. The Master Burn Plan sections the Preserve and sets priorities for implementation. By the end of the 2013-2014 fiscal year, nineteen sections (out of thirty-three) were burned by a contractor and one small wildfire occurred. The burn plan was reviewed and updated in 2014. A major change was that swamps were removed from the burn rotation.

On-going removal of exotic species is important to the conservation of the native species and the natural habitats of the Preserve. Exotic pest plants can crowd out native plants and, by doing so, reduce animal populations that depend on the native plants for food and habitat. The Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council is the primary source of information on exotic pest species. Grounds staff and contractors have participated in exotic pest plant removal. The Preserve is a small fragment of land that is highly susceptible to invasion. Exotic pest plant removal will be an on-going task.

Continued monitoring of unauthorized activity in the large northern section of the Preserve is necessary.

Species inventories should continue to provide a benchmark for on-going studies of the ecological health of the Preserve. Weak areas of the current inventories include insects, rodents and bats. Changes are expected with increased development of campus and surroundings.

An on-going study of water levels and water quality is needed. Water changes are expected with increased urbanization upstream, the use of pesticides in detention ponds and the use of the swamps as a campus storm water destination. These records will serve as benchmarks against which to evaluate change in the Preserve. Understanding these changes will help guide future management of the Preserve.

A better understanding of historical activities on campus site is needed. It is obvious that logging occurred. Old areas of pine plantation are evident. A small cypress dome exists in the southern end of the Preserve. Oral history says it was a restoration project by a UNF biology instructor and Physical Facilities Grounds staff. Old fire breaks were plowed

with bulldozers, potentially altering water flow. The banks of these breaks should be allowed to erode down.