



# The UERP Report

A Newsletter of the Upland Ecosystem Restoration Project

April—June 2007

By Greg Hagan, Coordinator

## Greetings Once Again!

Even as the majority of the state is experiencing significant drought conditions, UERP and its partners have been moving forward with land management activities, albeit at a much reduced pace. These steady gains continue to make a difference for Florida's grassland ecosystems. This issue of the newsletter will bring everyone up-to-date on our progress, challenges, and important news.

## Administrative Activities

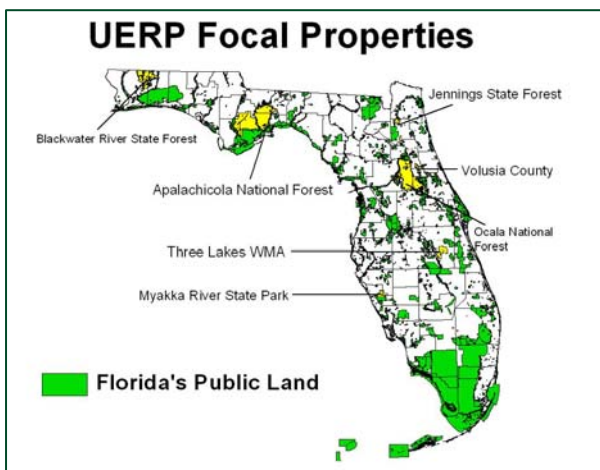
- Since our last issue, we have officially designated UERP focal areas on 4 additional properties (7 total) throughout the state to be managed with more intensive land management (frequent fire, roller chopping, mowing and appropriate timber management).

**Volusia County**—Lake George Forest and Wildlife Management Area (~8,000 acres).

**Jennings State Forest**—Long Branch Unit (~5,400 acres).

**Apalachicola National Forest**—Munson Sandhills Unit (~3,500 acres).

**Ocala National Forest**—The Church Lake Wildlife Management Area (~9,000 acres).



- Secured cooperative funds from the USDA, Forest Service and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to assist

funding for increased land management activities on the Apalachicola National Forest.

- Developed conceptual management plans for numerous focal areas to help guide our efforts. Plans are designed to provide the greatest possible conservation value to a broad suite of grassland species.
- Developing a MOU with the National Interagency Prescribed Fire Training Center that will assist in targeting the Center's activities on UERP focal areas.
- Publishing a brochure that outlines the principles, function, and efforts of the Upland Ecosystem Restoration Project.

## On-the-ground Activities

- Land Management activities have been steadily moving forward on several properties despite the dry conditions and lack of available staff due to multiple fire details.
- Prescribed fire was accomplished on approximately 5,600 acres throughout all focal areas prior to the statewide burn ban.
- Myakka River State Park has been successful in roller chopping approximately 350 acres of dense saw palmetto and wax myrtle.
- Three Lakes WMA has been successful in roller chopping approximately 400 acres of extremely high and dense saw palmetto. Roller chopping was stopped due to concerns over potential ground cover disturbance due to extreme drought conditions. Once adequate moisture is reached, efforts will resume. In addition to roller chopping, a mowing contractor was hired with assistance from the National Wild Turkey Federation to perform post-burn mowing.

*Pre roller chopping**Post roller chopping*

### Comments from the Coordinator

Drought conditions experienced throughout the state has made it difficult to accomplish prescribed burning goals thus far in 2007. It is extremely important to be prepared to burn once adequate moisture levels are reached. The “wait til next year” approach will only create a yearly back log of unburned acreage, which gets carried over year-to-year. It cannot be stated enough that the key factor in restoring these grassland habitats is simply that fire needs to be frequently applied to the landscape, regardless of season. ***Burn whenever possible!***

An important component of the Upland Ecosystem Restoration Project is monitoring to assess species and habitat response to the proposed more aggressive land management practices within the focal area. Due to current limitations in human and financial resources, it is clear we must be strategic in selecting what to monitor and how to monitor. We will be working over the next few months to develop a monitoring strategy proposal which will be submitted to Florida’s State Wildlife Grants Program. Monitoring of management practices most likely will be conducted at two levels: 1) response of individual focal species and 2) response of habitats or ecological communities. *Monitoring* is the critical “missing link” for the focal areas.

### Important News!

Kristi Candelora has been hired as the new UERP Private Lands Coordinator with the University of Florida- IFAS extension. Kristi will target private lands throughout the state working with landowners, government agencies, NGO’s and others to increase and improve management of upland ecosystems. She will establish focal areas that surround our public land efforts to ensure a coordinated landscape level approach between public and private land projects. Kristi can be contacted at: [kcandelora@ufl.edu](mailto:kcandelora@ufl.edu)



If you would like to participate in UERP or have any questions, please contact me at (850) 893-4153 xt 340) or [greg@ttrs.org](mailto:greg@ttrs.org). Please visit the Tall Timbers web site ([talltimbers.org](http://talltimbers.org)) for further information on UERP.

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