

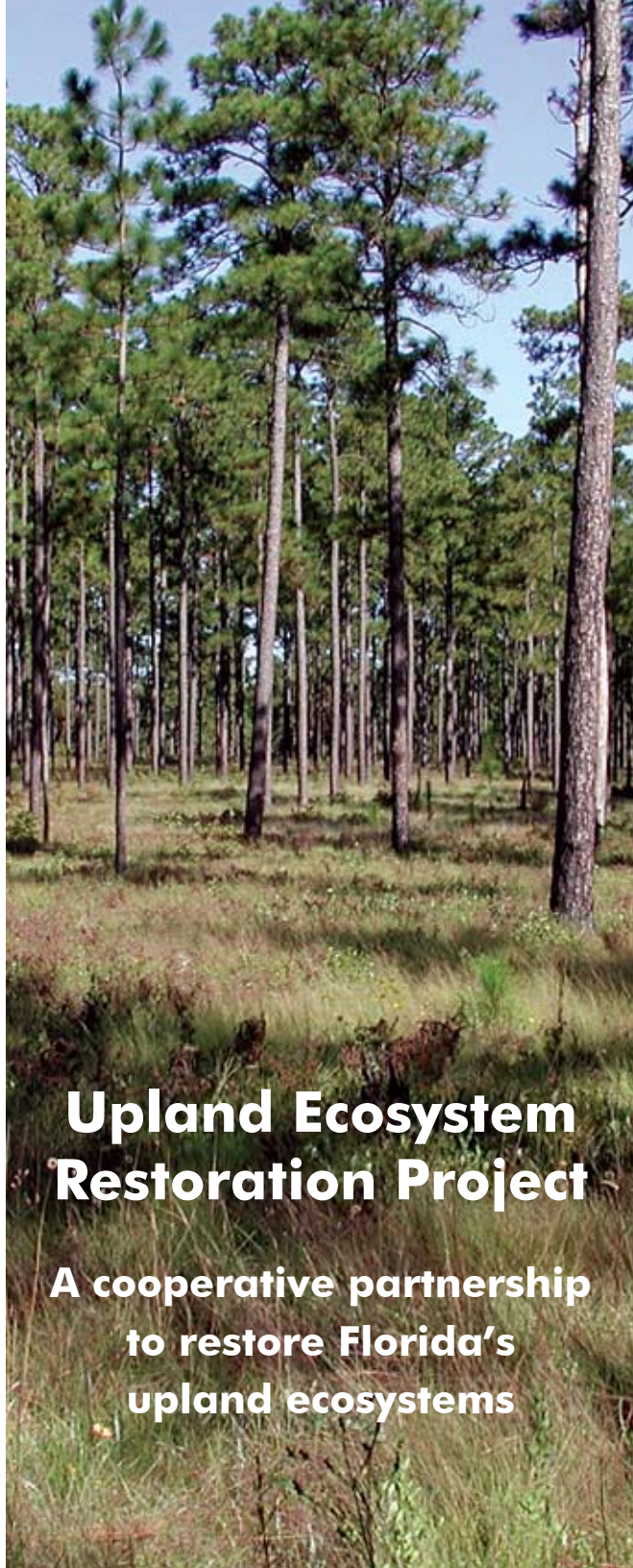


Upland Ecosystem Restoration Project funding is provided by the following:



Contributions to the UERP program help fund critical on-the-ground management efforts to enhance and protect quail and other declining species habitat on public lands in Florida. If you would like to make a tax-deductible contribution specifically dedicated to this project, please contact Greg Hagan, Project Coordinator at (850) 893-4153, x 340, or mail your contribution to Tall Timbers (please note UERP on your check to ensure proper accounting of your intent) and mail to the following address:

Tall Timbers
Research Station & Land Conservancy
UERP
13093 Henry Beadel Drive
Tallahassee, FL 32312-0918



Upland Ecosystem Restoration Project

A cooperative partnership to restore Florida's upland ecosystems

Making a difference for Florida's upland ecosystems

The Upland Ecosystem Restoration Project (UERP) is a cooperative partnership between Tall Timbers, state and federal agencies, the University of Florida, and numerous conservation groups to improve populations of declining fire-dependent wildlife species on public land throughout Florida.

The state of Florida, through its Florida Forever program, has the nation's largest environmental land acquisition program. While the state of Florida has protected millions of acres of upland habitat from development, management of these imperiled upland ecosystems has most often lacked attention to sustain ecosystem function and ecological diversity.

Upland ecosystems and species of greatest conservation need within them depend on frequent fires and appropriate timber management to sustain ecosystem function and ecological diversity. Over 100 species of upland plants and animals have been

identified in Florida's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy as species of greatest conservation need. These species include imperiled species such as red-cockaded woodpeckers, grasshopper sparrows, loggerhead shrikes, gopher tortoise, and indigo snake as well as other declining and once common species such as bobwhite quail.

Unfortunately, changes in land use and decades of incompatible fire and timber management have greatly altered plant communities at the landscape scale resulting in habitat fragmentation and declines of numerous fire-dependent wildlife species.



Even highly modified habitats can be improved ecologically with increased fire frequency and timber thinning. To effect change in management and policy, the Upland Ecosystem Restoration Project was developed to coordinate, prioritize, design, fund, and implement conservation strategies on public land throughout Florida.

What We Do

- # Develop long-term, landscape scale restoration projects on public land with measurable targets;
- # Increase prescribed fire frequency to 1 – 2 year intervals on focal landscapes to enhance grassland plant communities and the wildlife species dependent upon them;
- # Initiate appropriate timber management to maintain healthy groundcover communities, and;
- # Integrate planning of public and private land conservation programs within a state-wide planning framework.



Approach

- # Assess public lands for restoration/enhancement potential.
- # Select large, landscape scale focal areas.
- # Establish management plans that enhance habitats for declining species.
- # Build partnerships among agencies, foundations, NGOs, and citizens to support on-the-ground management.
- # Establish long-term monitoring to assess success.



Benefits

In the short-term, UERP is establishing restoration projects on more than 100,000 acres of publicly-owned uplands where frequent fire and thinning are needed to sustain diversity, function, and wildlife. In the long-term, UERP will serve as a blueprint for enhancement of species dependent on upland grassland communities. This project demonstrates an unprecedented coordinated effort to rejuvenate upland ecosystems for multiple conservation objectives and fulfilling numerous goals outlined in Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative.



Project Goals

- # Restore sustainable populations of bobwhite quail on public lands throughout Florida. Since 1966, bobwhite numbers, as well as numerous other species have declined drastically on public land. The decline in populations is direct result of the dramatic decline in early successional plant communities.
- # Increase the use of prescribed fire on a 1 – 2 year rotation on selected areas. Upland ecosystems depend on frequent fires to sustain ecosystem function and ecological diversity. Over 40 threatened or endangered plants, as well as, a myriad of wildlife species require the same pyric or early successional habitat as bobwhites.
- # Reduce pine basal area to between 40 – 60 ba on selected areas. Even highly modified habitats such as pine plantations could be improved ecologically with increased fire frequency and thinning, which is important because > 250,000 ha of pine plantations occur on conservation or managed lands.