

JENNINGS STATE FOREST (Clay County)

Initial State Acquisition: *August, 1990*

Area: *23,995 Acres*

Primary Basin(s): *Lower St. Johns River*

Current Number of DEP *FERI* Database Listings: *1 Project*

Previous Restoration Activities -

The Division of Forestry successfully restored the hydrology and, subsequently, the wet flatwoods plant communities of an altered forested site adjacent to a cypress swamp and bay head in the **Long Branch Tract (“Chicken Pond” Project)** in the spring of 2003. Two shallow ditches were back-filled to grade with original spoil piles adjacent to the ditches. Existing planting beds that were deeper than the surrounding relief, as well as those that crossed ephemeral streams, were rehabilitated to restore site hydrology. The disturbed areas were replanted with brown-top millet amended with Poly-acrylamide to prevent erosion. The use of hay and other mulches was avoided because of the concern for introducing exotics to the site. Subsequent visits to the site have observed significant increases in native wetland vegetation, approaching historic populations.

The forest roads leading to **Ellis** and **Indian Fords** on the Long Branch Tract have been heavily used for years by the public for access to the canoe launches on the North Fork Black and Big Branch Creeks, respectively. Both roads were severely eroded and were “patched” up as money and time would allow in previous years. In 2005 adequate funds were made available by a 319 Grant from EPA, administered through the Florida DEP, to repair both roads and the Indian Ford canoe launch area. The roads required re-shaping, back-filling and the installation of water bars, with occasional water turn-outs. The road beds were capped with a clay-slag mixture, which is uniquely and readily available to Jennings and other public lands in the NE Florida area.



JSF Figure 1: Restored parking area and canoe launch area at the Indian Ford Recreation Site

The Indian Ford road required the placement of a 24” culvert to facilitate cross-drainage just below the parking area and canoe launch approach (**see Figure 1**). To appreciate the extent of erosion that had taken place at the Indian Ford approach, up to four feet of back-fill was needed to bring the road up to grade in places. Once the road work was

completed, guardrails and traffic control structures were placed at each parking and launch area to reduce site degradation in the future.

Current/Planned/Proposed Restoration Activities –

The **Doe Road Project** is the only Jennings project currently listed on the *FERI* website, the on-going road improvement program on the forest enhances wetland functions conditions in the immediate vicinity of the footprint.

Wetland Restoration Needs Assessment –

Field assessment data was collected on the Longbranch, Yellow Water, and Old Jennings Tracts in the summer of 2007. **Sixty-six** assessment points were established, primarily focusing on wetland and stream crossings within the Black Creek watershed. The course of the assessment involved evaluating approximately **60** % of the roads, trails and firelines on the forest. The following observations made during the assessment are among the assessment findings. Additional information about the assessment is available upon request from the Division of Forestry.

1. High recreation use at the **Longbranch Cemetery Road Recreation Area** is causing the re-occurrence of site degradation and stream bank erosion.
2. Shallow ditches at the southern end of the **Evans Loop Horse Trail** appear to be directing wetland drainage away from its natural flow pattern. The ditches and/or the trail itself may need to be re-located to restore natural flow patterns.
3. Some culverts identified on the Forest (**Road 14**) should be replaced with larger diameter pipes to prevent blockage and blowout during high rainfall events.
4. Several sections of the roads leading to Ellis Ford and Knight’s Landing are eroding and, as a result, carrying sediment into nearby wetlands and floodplains. Road work is needed in these areas. While the DOF Road Crew and JSF management team are fully capable of addressing these problems, time and available resources are the limiting factors for accomplishing this work in a timely manner.



JSF Figure 2: Deep erosion requiring attention on the northern end of Road 8 on the Longbranch Tract.