

## **PINE LOG STATE FOREST (Bay/Washington Counties)**

**Initial State Acquisition:** *November, 1968*

**Area:** *6,915 Acres*

**Primary Watershed(s):** *Choctawhatchee; Pine Log Creek; Little Crooked Creek*

**Current Number of DEP *FERI* Database Listings:** *0 Projects*

### **Previous Restoration Activities -**

No formal wetland restoration activities have been planned or implemented on this forest to date.

### **Current/Planned/Proposed Restoration Activities –**

Currently there are no active restoration projects on this forest.

### **Wetland Restoration Needs Assessment -**

No restoration needs assessment work has been conducted on Pine Log State Forest as of this writing.

## **POINT WASHINGTON STATE FOREST (Walton County)**

**Initial State Acquisition:** *June, 1992*

**Area:** *15,321 Acres*

**Primary Watershed(s):** *Choctawhatchee River*

**Current Number of DEP *FERI* Database Listings:** *2 Projects*

### **Previous Restoration Activities -**

Despite numerous inquiries by environmental consultants and developers seeking mitigation project sites on the forest, only one project has been initiated on the Point Washington State Forest (PWSF). The “**Nature Walk**” **Development Mitigation Project**, initiated in 2005, was designed to incorporate a sequence of mechanical, chemical, and fire treatments around the overgrown edges of a number of isolated depression wetlands in the eastern portion of PWSF over a three year period (**see Figure 1**). The project intended to restore approximately 87 acres of wetland community where upland shrub species such as titi (*Cyrilla racemiflora*) and gallberry (*Ilex glabra*) had encroached into the wetland edges during extended periods of time without fire.

The short-term goal was to be able to safely re-introduce cooler seasonal fires into the surrounding wet flatwoods and wetland edges by removing the mid-canopy vegetation through mechanical or chemical treatments. Ultimately, seasonal burns will encourage a healthy grassy ecotone around the pond edges and provide beneficial breeding habitat for the flatwoods salamander (*Ambystoma cingulatum*) and other amphibians.

The project plan originally called for the use of a ‘gyro-trac’ or ‘bushhog’-type mowing implement. However, after flooded ground conditions delayed work early in 2005, project work began in August, 2005 using manual labor that was already working in the immediate vicinity of the project site. A ten-man crew used brush axes to cut all the gall berry and titi within a 50-ft. swath around a half-dozen targeted wetlands in the project area before the activity became too time-consuming and costly. The rest of the wetland ponds were cut with a ‘gyro-trac’ brush mower in the fall of 2005 and winter of 2006.

Drought conditions prevented burning the cut areas in 2006 and 2007. However, some ponds were mowed again in 2007 to maintain a safe fuel load at the sites. Control and monitoring plots were installed by the environmental consultant using both photo plots and permanent line transits. Data and photos were documented after the initial mowing treatment.

Unfortunately, in March, 2008 the funding source for the “Nature Walk” Project expired and work on the project has been discontinued indefinitely.



**PWSF Figure 1:** Nature Walk Mitigation Project - Pond #26 shortly after initial cut in 2005 (L) and one year later (R).

**Current/Planned/Proposed Restoration Activities –**

In 2006 the Department of Environmental Protection identified the western portion of the PWSF as a candidate for potential **Regional Off-Site Mitigation Area (ROMA)** designation. Project objectives within the ROMA may be similar to those of the “Nature Walk” mitigation project, i.e. vegetative wetland community restoration. As of this writing no work has been done to develop a ROMA Plan.

In 2007 an easement across part of the PWSF was granted to a private individual and his heirs for access to their property. As a special condition of the Birch Easement terms the grantee agreed to pay up to \$50,000 for contractual wetland restoration activities on the forest. Several potential project areas were identified on the Eastern Lake Tract during the wetland restoration needs assessment (**see next Section**). However, as of this writing no restoration activities have occurred.

The PWSF management staff has used the DOF Road Crew and in-house resources to improve road surface drainage by installing wing ditches and water bars to protect wetland water quality. The staff has also installed culverted and low-water stream crossings to enhance forest access as well as hydrological systems on the forest.

**Wetland Restoration Needs Assessment –**

Assessment work was conducted on the **Eastern Lake Tract** in June, 2007, which is bordered by US Hwy 98 on the east and Walton CR 395 on the west. A total of **51** site points were established on the tract, covering approximately **90%** of the roads, trails and firelines in this part of 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.



**PWSF Figure 2:** An unimproved low-water crossing on Peach Creek in the Eastern Lake Tract is being considered for improvement under an enhancement project under NFWMD's SWIM Program.

1. Most of the **13** culverted and **9** low-water crossings were functioning properly, without any apparent hindrance to wetland integrity or function.
2. **Fourteen** points were identified in the assessment as “high priority” mitigation project sites (**see Executive Summary, page iii**).
3. In 2004 FFWCC identified over 200 isolated wetland ponds that may be suitable breeding habitat for flatwoods salamander.
4. Erosion from a forest road adjacent to Peach Creek appeared to be discharging sediment into the stream channel. NFWMD has expressed interest treating this site under their SWIM Program (**see Figure 2**).