

Welcome to Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest

Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest is comprised of 32,039 acres located approximately thirty miles east of Fort Myers. Most of the state forest lies within Hendry County, with a section located in Collier County. Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest was purchased under the Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL) Program using Save Our Rivers and Preservation 2000 funds.



Prescribed Fire Maintains Healthy Ecosystems

The management objective for Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest is to provide multiple-use under the direction of the Florida Division of Forestry. Multiple-use management practices on the forest focus on ecosystem restoration, silviculture and watershed management, recreation and wildlife management, archaeological and cultural resource management.

History

The area of Okaloacoochee Slough was heavily logged in the early 1900s as this timber was ideal for making railroad crossties for a growing railroad system that was developing in southern Florida. During this time, sawmills began to spring up producing small towns dependent on these sawmills. One of these early towns, Sears, once

stood on the northern border of the forest. However, a fire destroyed the mill and soon afterwards the town of Sears disappeared.

During the same period, the Atlantic Land Improvement Company (ALICO), Inc. continued harvesting operations by utilizing two portable sawmills, which were referred to as the Twin Mills. Although the two sawmills no longer exist on the forest, remnants of sawdust piles can be found on the forest near Twin Mills Grade.

Natural Features

The Okaloacoochee Slough, the forest's namesake, is a 13,382-acre pristine slough that is oriented north-south through the forest. The natural systems of the Fakahatchee Strand and Big Cypress Preserve are dependent on the water supplied by the Okaloacoochee Slough. The Okaloacoochee Slough is one of the few places in south Florida in which the pre-Columbian landscape, north of the Everglades or Big Cypress National Preserve, can be observed.



Okaloacoochee Slough

Many of the natural communities located in south Florida can be found on the forest. There are eight distinct natural communities currently identified on Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest with mesic flatwoods and swale making up approximately 82 percent of the habitat.

This unique natural system provides a large roaming area of contiguous habitat for a variety of wildlife. The forest is home to listed species such as the Florida panther, Florida black bear, sandhill crane, wood stork and gopher tortoise.



Florida Panther

Recreation

The forest offers a variety of recreational activities for visitors. There are many miles of open forest roads available for hiking and bicycling. Fishing opportunities are plentiful in the numerous canals, ponds, and ditches that are accessible by vehicle. Several "hidden" areas can be found for those who enjoy a hike to an isolated fishing spot. The forest's wetlands provide opportunities for wildlife viewing.



Wildlife Viewing is Plentiful

Hunting is a popular activity on Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest. All hunts are conducted on a quota system and include: spring gobbler hunt, archery hunt, general gun hunt, special hog hunt, and a dove hunt. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission coordinates all hunting activities held on the forest. You can visit the FWCC website at <http://wildflorida.org/hunting/> for additional information.

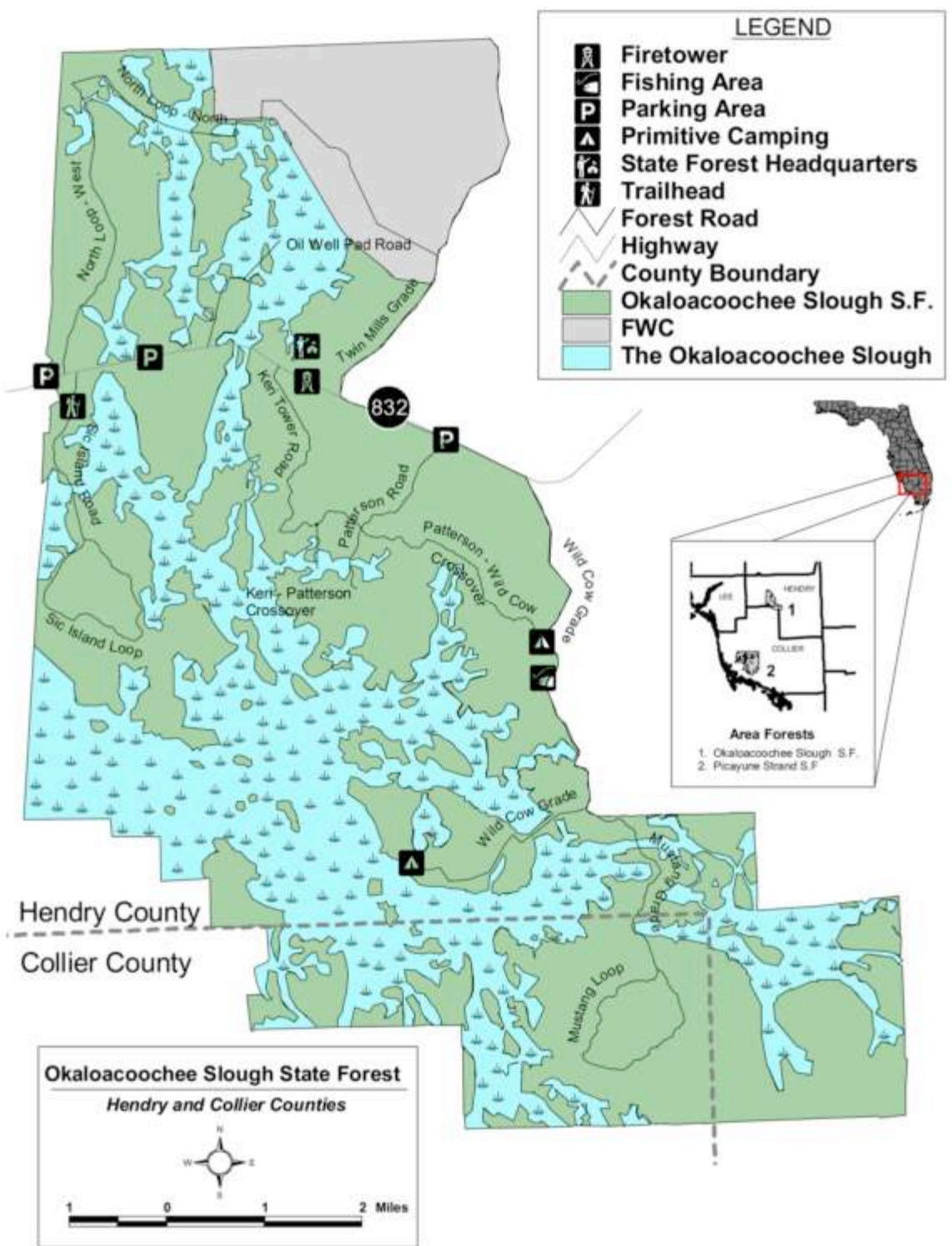
Things to Know When Visiting the Forest

In keeping with its mission to protect and manage Florida's forest resources for the present and future enjoyment of all Floridians, the Division of Forestry has developed rules which apply to all visitors to Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest. Some of the rules are:

- Hunting requires a license and permit, and is allowed only in designated areas during appropriate seasons.
- Plants and animals are protected. Please do not remove or destroy these natural resources.
- Drive on designated roads only.
- Please take all garbage with you when you leave the forest.
- Off-Highway Vehicles (OHVs) and unlicensed vehicles are not allowed on the forest.
- Visitors may be required to pay entrance or recreation use fees in designated areas. Annual Day Use Entrance Passes are available; contact your local Division of Forestry office for information.

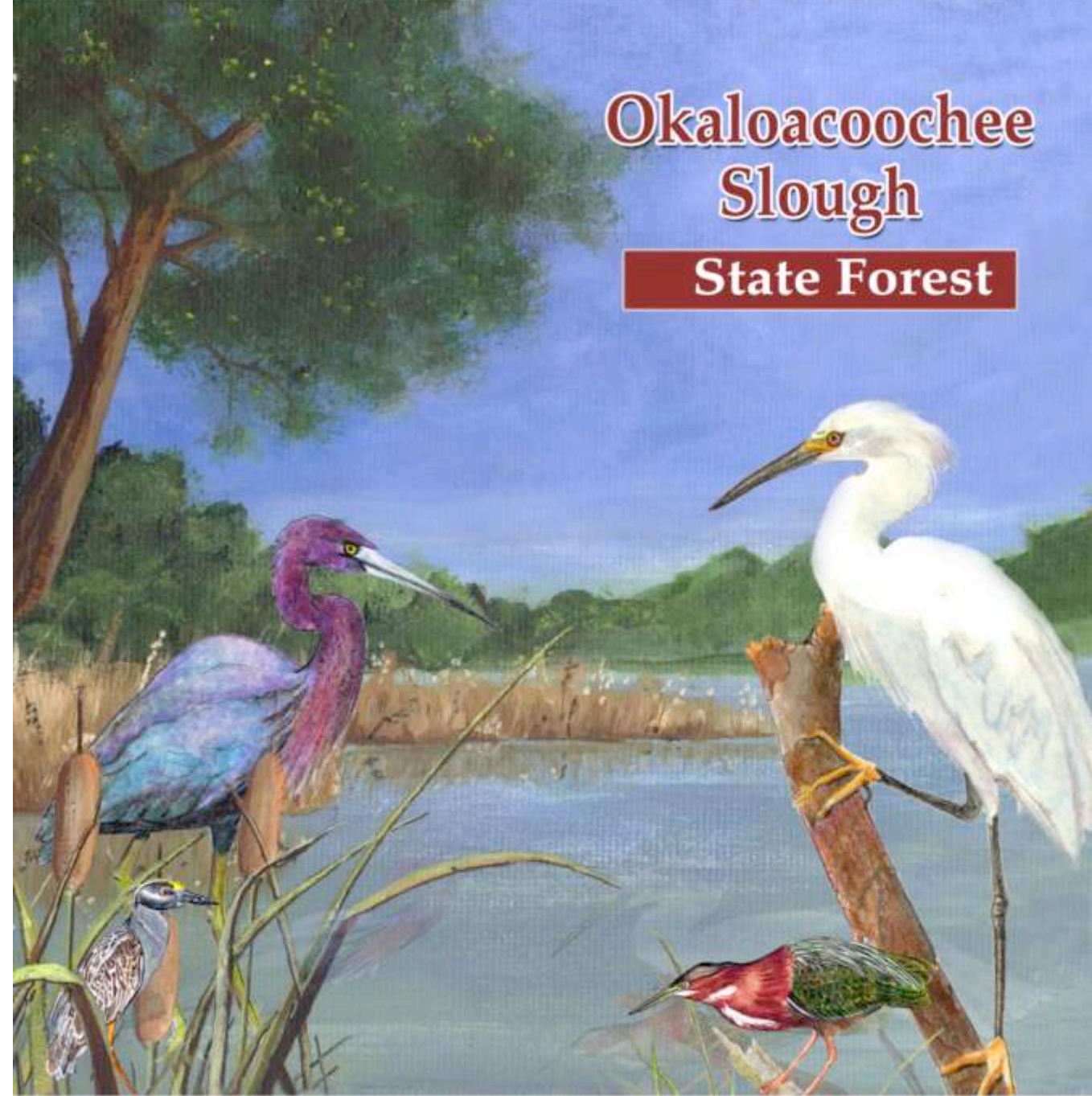
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Okaloacoochee Slough

State Forest



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