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National Forests in Florida

1994 Highlights

Forestry Report R8-FR 52



August 1995

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Caring for the Land and Serving People

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National Forests in Florida 1994 Highlights



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Cover photo of Juniper Springs Wilderness Area
courtesy of Clyde Butcher

*“When we see land as a
community to which we belong,
we may begin to use it with love
and respect.”*

Aldo Leopold
Madison, Wisconsin
March 4, 1948
From: *A Sand County Almanac*

A Message From the Forest Supervisor



Florida's climate and wealth of recreational opportunities attract visitors year-round. The large resident population of the State and the high volume of tourism place the National Forests in Florida among the East's most highly used forests. Despite the forests' popularity, visitors find quiet, remote areas — or, if they prefer, enjoy a wide range of activities from canoeing various waterways to hiking through alligator territory to picnicking in well-maintained picnic areas.



*Forest Supervisor Karl Siderits
National Forests in Florida*

Diversity is a word that comes to mind when describing Florida's national forests. All forests provide a stable forest community for more than 200 species. Something appealing to everyone can be found in one of Florida's three national forests. On the Apalachicola you will discover flat to gently rolling terrain and moist lowlands where cypress, oak, and savannas provide refuge for an unusual combination of grasses and wildflowers.

While visiting the Osceola you may catch a glimpse of an endangered red-cockaded woodpecker while hiking, fishing, or primitive camping. Between the Ocala's river boundaries, you will discover central Florida's highlands, coastal lowlands, swamps, cool springs, and hundreds of tranquil lakes and ponds fringed with lush tropical vegetation.

National Forests in Florida

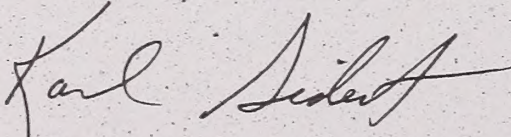
We manage these forests in trust for you — the owners. In his opening remarks at a recent conference of Forest Service leaders, Chief Jack Ward Thomas told the leaders the public is "more than just our customers, they are the owners of our nation's national forests and grasslands and the resources that they contain." In speaking about the importance of future generations, he added, "We must pass on our respect for people, land and resources. We must pass on our love and passion for the land and what we do." We of the National Forests in Florida strive for our actions to support the Chief's beliefs.

You, as the owners of these forests, have opinions that are important to us. In fact they are crucial to our efforts to make sound decisions. I will ensure that you, whether as an individual or an organized group, will be kept informed and will have the opportunity to work with the forests as partners in the wide variety of programs. Public involvement is essential in the management of these quality public lands.

The National Forests in Florida provide a balance between natural processes and human needs and desires. The Forest Service cares for the land and manages ecosystems for multiple uses, providing opportunities to local economies for everything from recreation-based industries to commodities-based businesses. Timber is logged for forest health benefits and to support local communities through a continuous flow of forest products. It is important to remember that our forests have to be sustained to provide these goods and services not only now, but in the future as well.

I am looking forward to working with you, and I am available to discuss issues or concerns with you.

Sincerely,



Karl P. Siderits

An Ecosystem Approach to Land Management



Since passage of the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) in 1976, legislation under which the Forest Service operates has remained essentially unchanged. However, many owners/customers have encouraged change in national forest management. The Forest Service's response to the need for change has been a rapid evolutionary move toward ecosystem management. Implementation of ecosystem management is designed to meet the needs of the people and maintain the health, diversity and sustainability of national forest ecosystems.

National Forests in Florida personnel are leaders in innovative and on-the-ground implementation of ecosystem management. A few notable examples include:

1. greater use of growing-season prescribed burning,
2. a new sand pine-scrub oak management strategy that ensures long-term sustainability of that ecosystem,
3. completion of a red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) foraging study on the Apalachicola National Forest that may increase management options in RCW habitat,
4. less clearcutting; less use of intense, ground-disturbing methods of preparing sites for planting; less use of plowed firelines; and meeting acceptable stocking levels by planting fewer pines, and
5. developed partnerships and increased collaboration with state agencies, special interest groups and other conservation organizations to ensure we implemented the most innovative and progressive approaches to ecosystem management.

Despite these significant innovations in ecosystem management, more needs to be done. Our ecological approach to land management will help improve organization, personnel, educa-

tion, communication and direction. We have organized all resource management functions at the Supervisor's Office, located in Tallahassee, into one staff area managed by an ecosystem coordinator. Key to success will be a leadership style that encourages teamwork while empowering specialists to be innovative in effecting desirable change on the ground. This new, progressive approach shows our commitment to pursuing high quality forest management. Many changes have already taken place on Florida's national forests as a result of this new management philosophy.

Fire Ecology and Management

Prescribed fire in the growing season is another area of focus. A successful prescribed-fire regime mimics naturally occurring fires. In Florida, that means increasing the numbers of fires in the growing season. These burns are vital to the health of longleaf pine/wiregrass and associated ecosystems. Until recently, we did little growing-season prescribed burning. However, with the encouragement of many forest owners, the grow-



Prescribed burning is an ecosystem management tool used by the Forest Service in the regeneration of plant life. Fire exposes soil, thereby allowing seedlings to settle in the earth.

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ing-season prescribed-burning program has grown to about 20 percent of the total acres burned.

While complete restoration of plowed firelines is not possible, rehabilitation efforts have been hailed by many interested forest owners as successful. Since 1990, we have fought several large wildfires and firelines were plowed in efforts to control these fires. Crews were employed to rehabilitate many of these plowed lines. The goal was to restore the area's hydrology and reestablish continuity of the plant community. This example demonstrates a continuing change in attitude toward managing the forest in a more ecologically responsible manner.

Sand Pine/Scrub Oak Management

The largest remaining sand pine/scrub oak ecosystem occurs on the Ocala National Forest. The "scrub" ecosystem has many endemic species including Florida scrub jay, scrub buckwheat, scrub morning glory and Ashe's savory. These species are adapted to early successional stages of scrub produced by periodic, catastrophic disturbance, primarily fire.

Through an integrated resource planning process, including outside partners, the Ocala National Forest developed a landscape-level plan. It involves periodic clearcutting, prescribed fire, mechanical disturbance and other measures. This approach helps control age, distribution and density of sand pine within the Big Scrub. The overall approach maximizes habitat continuity, species diversity and ecosystem sustainability while simultaneously providing high-demand commodities.

Red-cockaded Woodpecker

The Forest submitted for publication in *Journal of Wildlife Management*, a study of the relationship between red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) reproductive success and foraging habitat quality. Our cooperators included the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Forest Service's Southeastern Forest Experiment Station. The study was intended to resolve conflicts between

National Forests in Florida

satisfying RCW foraging habitat requirements and meeting other desirable or essential management activities related to the recovery of the species or the ecosystem upon which it depends.

Clearly, the National Forests in Florida have made significant strides in ecological approaches to land management. Although there have been profound results, much remains to be done if we are to become truly effective in ecosystem management. Your input and collaboration as a forest owner are essential to continuing these and future innovative programs and ensuring their success.

1994 Accomplishments



- ◆ Challenge cost-share project with the University of Florida for ecological classification work to inventory and monitor scrub jay, scrub lizard, and amphibians on the Ocala National Forest.
- ◆ Monitoring water quality of selected lakes on the Ocala National Forest through the Florida Lake Watch program in cooperation with the University of Florida and volunteers.
- ◆ Utilized regional hot shot crew to increase prescribed burning capabilities for ecosystem management on Florida's three national forests.
- ◆ Assisted in completion of *Florida Wildlife Viewing Guide* and a *Birding Guide to 40 National Forests and Grasslands*.
- ◆ Completed draft certification plan with Eglin Air Force Base for construction of an additional 76 miles on the Florida National Scenic Trail.
- ◆ Developed a challenge cost-share project with The Wilderness Society to produce a photo display of wilderness areas on our forests. This project celebrates the 30th anniversary of the Wilderness Act. The photographs feature the work of renowned Florida landscape photographer Clyde Butcher.
- ◆ Improved our telecommunications system by installing new phone systems at all districts, standardizing radio channels, converting to tone control (CTCSS), and upgrading cable at most towers.

Management Highlights



Florida's three national forests are a rich, vital resource demonstrating diverse and dynamic ecosystems. During 1994, we pursued a comprehensive, innovative strategy of using ecosystem management to preserve and enhance Florida's unique national forests.

Innovative projects underway include a comprehensive fire and ecosystem management project on the Apalachicola National Forest near Tallahassee, an ecosystem analysis on a complex 1,200-acre acquisition area along the Ochlockonee River, and the addition of Deep Creek — a 270-acre property next to Osceola's northwest boundary — to assist management of Florida's National Scenic Trail.

A brief look at several major areas of management within our forests provides insight into the outstanding, on-going accomplishments.

Recreation

Recreation opportunities were plentiful in 1994. Several outstanding recreation projects implemented through partnerships include: a scenic byway interpretive and recreation guide, and management plan; a Geological Interpretive Study tool for predicting cultural resource locations; donation of a historic 1888 railroad depot; a feasibility study for a 55-mile rail-to-trail proposal on 25 miles of forest land, with the state agreeing to conduct the necessary environmental assessment; and finalization of an agreement to construct the first trail shelter on the Florida National Scenic Trail.

Prescribed Burning

National Forests in Florida introduced management-ignited prescribed fire to several wilderness study areas, including one

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with no fire activity for more than 17 years. The term "prescribed fire" applies to fire that burns under controlled conditions with skilled planning and evaluation. Fire has been a part of the ecological system for centuries and helps regenerate plant life. Prescribed fire does not kill most native plants. Nutrients in the soil are recycled, thereby supplying the forest with more fruitful growth.

Red-cockaded Woodpeckers

Red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) management continues to be a major focus. Several public meetings were held throughout the year to update interested publics on management direction and to provide a forum for public input. We translocated 24 birds through our RCW augmentation program, and banded more than 350 nestlings. Completion of an agreement with St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge in 1994 will pave the way for cooperative management of RCW's.

Partnerships

Partnerships and public involvement have routinely played a primary role in forest management. Forest Supervisor Karl Siderits recognizes the value of public involvement and actively encourages participation. "It is the public who owns the land; we are simply the stewards of the land charged with overseeing the management process," says Siderits. "And it is the public who ultimately determines what that process will be."

Partnerships have paved the way for many worthwhile projects including: one of 25 top national proposals to develop Job Corps links with local and state education institutions and communities; an agreement with the State of Florida on treatment of three hazardous waste sites on the Osceola National Forest; an agreement with the state to restore wetlands impacted by improvements to Forest Highway 13; an organized assistance program geared toward flood victims of Liberty and Calhoun counties; and western fire support.

National Forests in Florida

We actively maintain quality relationships with local and state government through representation on various committees. Our participation on three statewide ecosystem management committees provides a unique opportunity to advise the state on the Florida Ecosystem Management Initiative. Recommendations from these committees will be presented to the Governor and State Legislature during the next legislative session. Collaborative opportunities such as these help ensure that we are working to establish and implement the most up-to-date ecosystem management principles.

Land Acquisition

With the help of The Nature Conservancy, we acquired more than 4,100 acres in Pinhook Swamp and Tate's Hell, two vital wilderness areas adjacent to the Osceola and Apalachicola National Forests.

Acquisitions in the Pinhook Purchase Unit are significant because they connect the 187,500-acre Osceola National Forest with the 396,000-acre

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. This area is now one of the largest greenway connectors in the country. It is also an ecologically crucial wetland, providing habitat for the Florida black bear and endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers and wood storks.



Through an agreement with Trust for Public Land, the 1,420-acre Bradwell Game Farm along the Ocklockonee River is now part of Apalachicola National Forest and will be managed to enhance wildlife and recreational activities.

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Another accomplishment was the acquisition of 4,053 acres of land in Tate's Hell, located adjacent to and south of the Apalachicola National Forest. This is an important wetland and endangered species habitat. It will also serve to help protect drainage into Apalachicola Bay, which supports a \$14-million commercial seafood industry.

Human Resources

We have always pursued a strong policy of equal opportunity in employment. The workforce of Florida's three national forests is currently composed of 47 (25.8 percent) minorities and 72 (39.6 percent) female employees. In addition, all diversity funded, cooperative education students completed their educational requirements and will be converted to trainee positions.

An agreement with State Vocational Rehabilitation programs was developed to provide job experience opportunities for clients on a volunteer basis, and a partnership with the Association of Retarded Citizens provides an opportunity for mentally-challenged individuals to help maintain quality recreation sites on our forests.

We have continually demonstrated strong support of education and interpretation programs. Our Ocala National Forest bus tours program earned the Interpretive Award for Region 8 in 1994. Additional partnerships designed to promote educational programs are Project Learning Tree, Envirothon, and "Weekend in the Woods" workshops with state educators. We also helped Walt Disney World, Inc., develop an interpretive trail at their Fort Wilderness Resort.

In Summary

Dedication and hard work of our employees are clearly evident through the innovative, conscientious and environmentally sensitive programs and policies being implemented. We invite every Floridian to play a part in guiding the management of Florida's three national forests. After all, the national forests belong to you, the public, and the Forest Service serves as stewards of the land.

Fiscal Year 1994 Forest Facts

Acreage

	<u>Apalachicola</u>	<u>Ocala</u>	<u>Osceola</u>	<u>Choctawhatchee*</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Established	05/13/36	11/24/08	07/10/31	11/27/08	
Present	632,890	430,446	190,932	1,152	1,255,420
Acreage					
NF lands	566,946	383,220	187,554	1,152	1,138,872
Private lands	65,944	47,226	3,378	0	116,548

* Except for the national forest receipts and revenue returned to counties, all figures for this unit are included with figures for the Apalachicola National Forest.

Fire

	<u>Apalachicola</u>	<u>Ocala</u>	<u>Osceola</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Wildfires	25	74	9	108
Acres burned by wildfires	451	916	45	1,412
Prescribed burning (acres)				
Rough reduction	34,320	9,560	10,925	54,805
Silvicultural	293	188	543	1,024
Range forage improvement	2,000	0	2,296	4,296
Wildlife habitat improvement	16,260	15,599	5,900	37,759
TOTALS	52,873	25,347	19,664	97,884

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*Forest Service
Archeologist Rhonda
Kimbrough conducts a
dig at the Langston
House as part of our
Heritage Program.*

Heritage Program

	<u>Apalachicola</u>	<u>Ocala</u>	<u>Osceola</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Acres surveyed	5,348	3,078	1,132	9,558
Acres inventoried	600	2,735	0	3,335
Special-use projects*	2	1	2	5
Sites recorded	34	18	8	60
Sites evaluated	2	7	0	9

* A special-use project is an activity that takes place on the forest and requires obtaining a special-use permit.

Recreation

	<u>Apalachicola</u>	<u>Ocala</u>	<u>Osceola</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Wilderness (Acres)	32,692	28,147	13,660	74,499
Visitor days*	518,800	2,155,300	483,400	3,157,500
Developed acres	15	22	8	45
Fee areas	2	14	2	18
Horse and hiking trails (miles)	121.5	217.4	20.6	359.5

* A visitor day is the equivalent of one person remaining at a site for 12 hours.

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Timber

<u>Volume Totals</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1993</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>1991</u>	<u>1990</u>
Sold*	48.4	71.6	74.1	92.5	66.3
Harvested*	60.5	90.1	74.8	57.9	83.7

* Numbers are expressed in million board feet. One board foot = 1 foot x 1 foot x 1 inch

	<u>Apalachicola NF</u>		<u>Ocala NF</u>		<u>Osceola NF</u>		<u>TOTALS</u>
	<u>Apalachicola District</u>	<u>Wakulla District</u>	<u>Lake George District</u>	<u>Seminole District</u>	<u>Osceola District</u>		
<u>Acres harvested</u>							
Clearcut	0	78**	2,102*	1,463*	203		3,846
Shelterwood	0	15	0	0	67		82
Seed tree	0	30	0	0	71		101
Thinnings	1,038	1,594	1,343	386	287		4,648

*Sand pine

** Off-site slash pine

Water

The National Forests in Florida produce about 1.86 million acre feet (600 billion gallons) of water annually to surface water and groundwater systems.

- ◆ Springs produce more than 200 million gallons of water each day.
- ◆ Contain more than 36,000 acres of lakes and ponds plus 415,000 acres of wetlands.
- ◆ Border portions of four of the State's largest rivers — Oklawaha, St. Johns, Ochlockonee and Apalachicola.

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Human Resources

<u>Program</u>	<u>Participants</u>	<u>Year equivalents</u>	<u>Value of accomplishment</u>
College Work Study/Hosted	74	16.88	\$189,352
Youth Conservation Corps	1	.18	\$1,620
Senior Community Service			
Employment Program	169	79.92	\$1,123,002
Volunteers	991	36.50	\$465,761
Touch-America Program	8	.21	\$3,110
TOTALS	1,243	133.69	\$1,782,845

National Forest Receipts

<u>Source</u>	<u>Apalachicola</u>	<u>Ocala</u>	<u>Osceola</u>	<u>Choctawhatchee</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Recreation user fees	\$4,653	\$270,772	\$32,439	0	\$307,864
Timber products	446,032	1,878,357	374,359	0	2,698,748
Grazing fees	3,908	0	1,719	0	5,627
Land use fees	88,379	234,914	36,746	5,180	365,219
Mineral leases	365	180	900	0	1,445
TOTALS	\$543,337	\$2,384,223	\$446,163	\$5,180	\$3,378,903

National Forests in Florida

Revenue Returned To Counties

	<u>Apalachicola</u>	<u>Ocala</u>	<u>Osceola</u>	<u>Choctawhatchee</u>
Type of revenue:				
25% gross receipts	Franklin \$7,205 Leon 34,507 Liberty 88,107 Wakulla <u>56,756</u> Totals \$186,575	Lake \$164,219 Marion 537,934 Putnam <u>46,104</u> Totals \$748,256	Baker \$72,153 Columbia <u>59,802</u> Totals \$131,954	Okaloosa \$588 Walton 586 Santa Rosa <u>121</u> Totals \$1,295

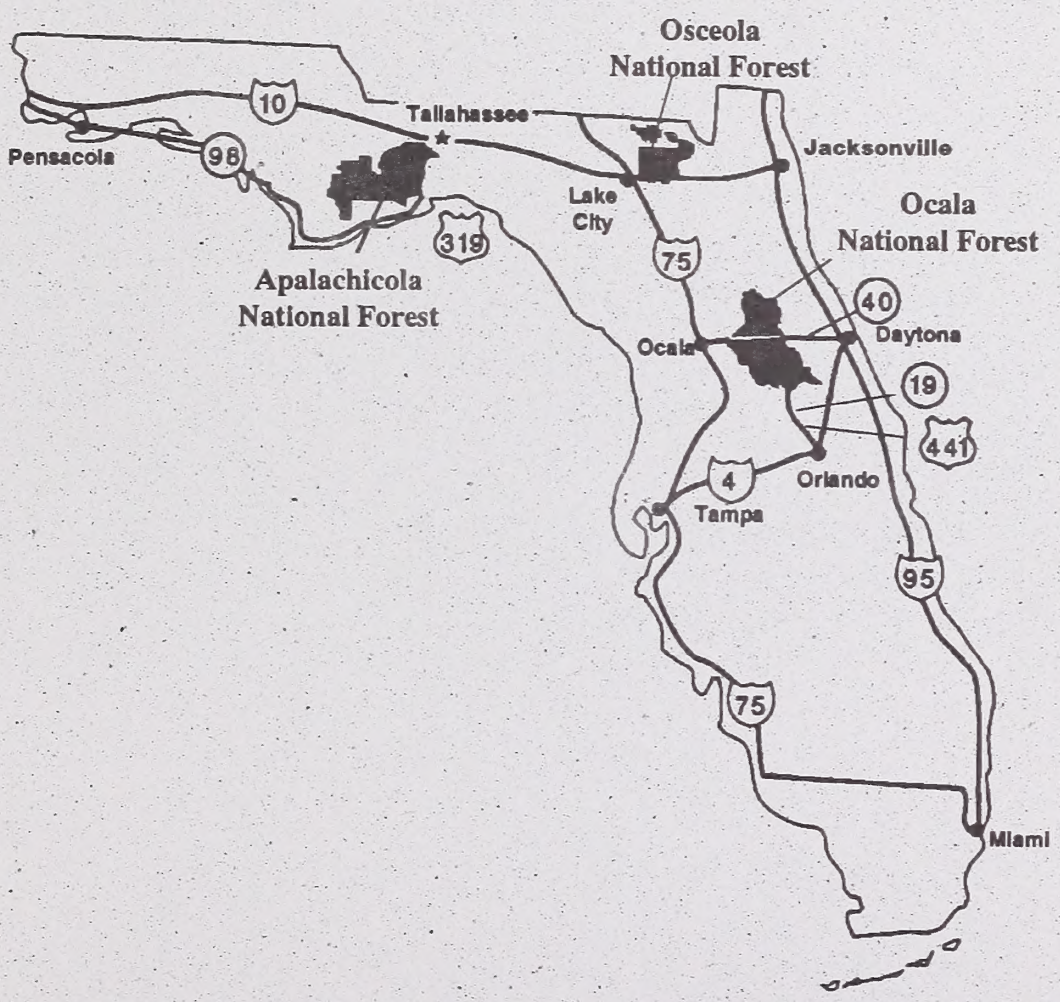
Total 25 % Receipts, All Forests: \$1,068,081
These monies are for the benefit of schools and roads.

	<u>Apalachicola</u>	<u>Ocala</u>	<u>Osceola</u>	<u>Choctawhatchee</u>
Type of revenue:				
Payment in lieu of taxes	Franklin \$10,601 Leon 50,638 Liberty 129,522 Wakulla <u>83,360</u> Totals \$274,121	Lake \$8,407 Marion 27,906 Putnam <u>2,585</u> Totals \$38,898	Baker \$10,256 Columbia <u>8,494</u> Totals \$18,750	Okaloosa \$405 Walton 0 Santa Rosa <u>149</u> Totals \$554

Total Payment in Lieu of Taxes, All Forests: \$332,323

Grand Total, All Forests: \$1,400,404

National Forests in FLORIDA



National Forests in Florida

For more information about your National Forests in Florida contact the Forest Service office nearest you.

Forest Supervisor — Karl Siderits
National Forests in Florida
Woodcrest Office Park
325 John Knox Road, Suite F-100
Tallahassee, FL 32303-4160
904/942-9300

APALACHICOLA NATIONAL FOREST

Wakulla District

Ranger Ron Smith
1773 Crawfordville Hwy
Crawfordville FL 32327
904/926-3561

Apalachicola District*

Ranger Andy Colaninno
FL Highway 20
P.O. Box 579
Bristol FL 32321
904/643-2282

*Includes the
Choctawhatchee National
Forest lands.

OCALA NATIONAL FOREST

Lake George District

Ranger Jerry Clutts
17147 East Highway 40
Silver Springs FL 34488
904/625-2520

Lake George Visitor Center

10863 East Highway 40
Silver Springs FL 34488
904/625-7470

Seminole District

Ranger Jim Thorsen
40929 State Road 19
Umatilla FL 32784
904/669-3153

Pittman Visitor Center

45621 State Road 19
Umatilla FL 32702
904/669-7495

OSCEOLA NATIONAL FOREST

Osceola District

Ranger Keith Lawrence
US Highway 90
P.O. Box 70
Olustee FL 32072
904/752-2577



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"The objective of the USDA Forest Service is to provide a continuing flow of natural resource goods and services to help meet the needs of the national and international communities by providing a sustained flow of outdoor recreation, forage, wood, water, fish, wildlife, and wilderness."

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