

Lee County's Conservation Lands



Congratulations!

You are fortunate enough to live near one of Lee

County's preserves. Not only may this increase the value of your property, but it will also provide you with years of enjoyment, opportunities for nearby resource-based recreation and the security of knowing that these areas will be kept as natural places.

Lee County land stewardship staff encourages you to learn more about these protected natural areas. Stewardship plans for many of the preserves are available online

www.conservation2020.org. The plans outline the strategies to improve and protect the preserves for years to come. Staff is also available to answer your questions and lead educational field trips.

Lee County Parks and Recreation staff conduct many activities that help keep your local conservation lands healthy. Although you may not always see us, we are always working to monitor, enhance and protect these areas. This brochure was designed to explain some of our work and suggest some ways you can help.



Invasive Exotic Plants

Believe it or not, there are more than 70 species of invasive exotic plants found on conservation lands in Lee County! **Exotic plants** are plants that are not from Florida, but have come here either by accident or were brought here intentionally. **Invasive exotic** plants are those that have invaded natural areas, often taking over so that very few native plants can grow. This impacts wildlife by reducing the variety of plants needed for their survival. Sometimes invasive exotics can increase the fire hazard and block natural water flow.



We use a wide variety of methods to remove these invasive exotic plants, including heavy equipment (pictured above) which mulches large exotic trees to the ground.

How Can You Help?

- 🌿 Avoid planting plants that are listed as invasive exotics in your yard and remove exotics currently growing there. See www.fleppc.org for a current list of problem plants.
- 🌿 Use native plants in your home landscape when possible. These plants often require less water and many will attract birds and/or butterflies. The Florida Yards and Neighborhoods program provides many recommendations at www.FloridaYards.org.
- 🌿 Use your designated horticultural trash pickup days. Throwing yard waste on the preserves is illegal and can spread exotic plants and create fire hazards.
- 🌿 Aquarium plants and house plants should be disposed with your weekly horticultural waste. Many of these plants are on the invasive exotic plant list!

Prescribed Fire



Prescribed fire is one of the most important management tools available to Lee County staff for managing conservation lands. Many Florida ecosystems depend on fire for survival. By conducting controlled burns during certain "prescribed" conditions, we are also

able to reduce the risk of wildfire which can threaten homes and property. Staff is working to install firelines (areas cleared of vegetation) to assist with fire management and protect neighbors.

How Can You Help?

- 🌿 Support the use of prescribed fire in local conservation lands. Staff plans the burns so there is minimal smoke/ash in neighborhoods.
- 🌿 Never leave fires unattended on your property.
- 🌿 Use FIREWISE landscaping techniques around your home www.firewise.org.
- 🌿 Yard debris or other trash in conservation areas eliminate the effectiveness of the firelines installed to protect neighborhoods. Please dispose of all trash on your designated pickup day.



A fireline made useless by a careless neighbor

Using Lee County's Conservation Land Wisely

Lee County Parks and Recreation currently manages more than 17,000 acres of conservation land. A few have staff that are on site every day, but most are only visited occasionally. Keep an eye on the conservation lands near your home.



How Can You Help?

- 🌿 Always enter the Preserves through designated access points (typically posted with signs).
 - 🌿 Follow the local regulations (06-26) in place to protect these natural areas www.lee-county.com/ordinances.
 - 🌿 Respect boundaries and do not encroach over property lines. Contact us if you are not sure where the boundaries are before you work on a shared boundary.
 - 🌿 Alert us if you see issues such as:
 - ▶ Damage to fences or gates
 - ▶ Palmetto berry pickers or removal of other plants
 - ▶ Hunting, off-road-vehicles or other illegal uses of the preserve
 - ▶ Illegal dumping
- For help on evenings and weekends, please call Office of the Lee County Sheriff (239) 477-1200*
- 🌿 Let us know if you see something you would like to share such as:
 - ▶ An animal nesting
 - ▶ An endangered or rare animal sighting
 - ▶ A new flower or plant blooming

Lee County's Land Stewardship staff can be reached by calling the main parks number (239) 461-7400