University of Florida Conservation Area Land Management Plan

Bat House Woods

Introduction

Bat House Woods is the official name for the 8.5 acre wooded area adjacent to Physical Plant greenhouses and across Museum Road from the northwest corner of Lake Alice. This area was identified in previous master plans as a Preservation Area (3), due to its relatively undisturbed natural character and its proximity to Lake Alice. However, it appears that since that time additional encroachment has occurred and portions of the understory have been converted to botanical maintenance facilities. Additionally, much of the area has been taken over by invasive non-native plants that cover most of the ground and our winding up many of the pines and oaks.

Natural Areas Inventory

Water Resources

An intermittent creek / drainage canal flows through Bat House Woods flows and drains into a sink, adjacent to the University's golf course. Historically, most of the flow in the creek originated as irrigation water from the adjacent green houses operated by Physical Plant, however, with the closing of the of the nursery this source of water has been reduced . Mapping completed by Causseau & Ellington, Inc. delineated a narrow wetland area adjacent to the stream and sink, as well as the 100-year floodplain that covers the western half of the woods and extends into the former nursery. Basin mapping for the University's stormwater management master plan indicates that this Conservation Area is in a depressional basin, as is evidenced by the fact that the creek flows into the sinkhole. Flooding during the hurricanes of 2004 indicates that Lake Alice drains into the sink during times of high water levels. Additionally, historical information document that this sink and Sweet Sink were the primary drainage outlets for Lake Alice before drainage wells were put in.

Green House intermittent creek / canal

Natural Communities

Bat House Woods is comprised primarily of a mesic / upland-mixed hardwood forest, although this site is a little more pine dominated then other sites on campus. Soils are generally sandy-clays or clayey sands with substantial organic and often calcareous components. In larger, less strenuous

conditions, mixed forests typically support significant wildlife and plant diversity, which result from the nutrient rich nature of hardwood forests and flowering and fruiting plants. At present, a survey of Flora and Fauna is not planned for this conservation area.

Plant Species
The canopy in this area is comprised of pignut hickory, winged elm, sweet gum, loblolly pine, laurel oak, cabbage palm, longleaf pine, and slash pine.

Invasive non-native plant species
Future management of the site will need to address invasive plant management. The following invasive non-native plants have been documented on site: air potato vine, Japanese climbing fern, cats claw vine, coral ardisia, small-leaf spiderwort, glossy privet, loquat tree, English Ivy.

Animal Species
These woods are relatively small in size, which limits the amount of habitat for terrestrial species. Therefore, only common mammals well adapted to edge environments like raccoons, gray squirrels and armadillos have been documented on site. Additionally, a fox was seen during a summer site visit. Other animals typically found in mesic hardwood systems, but which have not been documented on the property, include: slimy salamander, Cope's gray treefrog, bronze frog, box turtle, eastern glass lizard, green anole, broadhead skink, ground skink, red-bellied snake, gray rat snake, rough green snake, coral snake, woodcock, barred owl, pileated woodpecker, shrews, eastern mole, wood rat, cotton mouse, gray fox, and white-tailed deer.


Mixed pine-hardwood forest.

Soils Inventory
The following soil information for on-site soils was gathered from the Soil Survey of Alachua County (1985).

Arredondo Urban Land Complex (0-5% slope)

This soil complex consists of well drained nearly level to gently sloping Arredondo soils and Urban Land. About 50 to 85% of each delineation is open areas of Arredondo soils. These open areas are gardens, vacant lots, lawns or playgrounds. Typically, the surface layer of Arredondo soils is dark grayish brown fine sand about 6 inches thick.

Millhopper Urban Land Complex (0-5% slope)
This nearly level to gently sloping, moderately well drained soil is in small and large irregularly shaped areas on uplands and slightly rolling knolls in the broad flatwoods. Typically, the surface layer is dark grayish brown sand about 9 inches thick. The subsurface layer is sand or fine sand about 49 inches thick.

Cultural and Passive Recreational Resources
As stated previously, this site has been heavily invaded by exotic plants that dominate the understory throughout the woods. This conservation area is not very well known or accessible from the main campus and there are no trails or benches for visitors to use. The primary physical assist of the site is the sinkhole, however in its current degraded condition; enhancement of this area is of questionable value. Southern portions of this site overlap with the potential archeological sites map. Although no known sites have been in identified, future improvements to the site will take into account the location of known areas and follow guidelines by the Department of Historical Resources.

Future Improvements

Future management should focus on improving upstream water quality and removal of invasive plants. Historically, Physical Plant operations have tended to encroach into the woods. In order to define the boundaries and discourage encroachment, boundary markers or fencing will need to be placed along the boundary edge, adjacent to Physical Plant greenhouses. Additionally, once invasive plants are under control, efforts should be made to enhance wildlife habitat with beneficial vegetative plantings and habitat structures. While this site has the characteristics of a Nature Park its remote location away from the main campus, disturbed natural community and security concerns associated with access to the Physical Plant compound make it a low priority for physical improvements and point to being considered as a Nature Preserve, with no public access.

Actions Since 2005

The primary actions taken in these woods since 2005 has been to use the site yearly for the air-potato round-up and some student volunteer clean-up efforts. In addition, a conservation area sign was installed at the intersection of Museum and Radio Roads. This site has hosted the City of Gainesville's round-up since at least 2003. Unfortunately, no other improvements have been planned for these woods and it is unlikely to see additional improvement in the next 5 years. However, University staff will continue to facilitate volunteer efforts to clean trash and eradicate invasive exotic plants.

Maps on the following pages:
1. Aerial Photo
2. Water Resources
3. Natural Communities
4. Soils