University of Florida Conservation Areas Land Management Plan

Dash Course Woods

Introduction

The DASH Course is a 3.3 acre Conservation Area located on Village Drive and SW 2nd Avenue. In the 1980s this area was designed for use as a passive recreation, exercise area for people with disabilities. While some of these facilities are still present (paved trails, pavilion and some work out stations), the facility has not been maintained sufficiently to be used for this purpose any longer. Additionally, since the time of its inception, other facilities for people with disabilities have been placed in the student fitness centers. This site contains a disturbed, upland mixed forest that lost pine trees during the Pine Beetle outbreak in 2003, which opened it up to invasive plant species. Mapping from the 2000-2010 Campus Master Plan inconsistently showed this area as upland preservation, with an underlying land use of Passive Recreation. These inconsistencies are corrected in the 2005-2010 Comprehensive Master Plan that designates the DASH Course as a Conservation Area, with the appropriate land use of Conservation.

Natural Areas Inventory

Water Resources

DASH Course Woods does not contain any permanent water features, but does provide some water resource protection, through recharge to the surficial aquifer and stormwater abatement. These woods are upstream of Lake Alice and, therefore, provide the lake some resource protection by being maintained in their undeveloped state.

Stormwater is a dominant watershed issue within the Lake Alice watershed. The current stormwater permit with the St. Johns River Water Management District does not require additional stormwater treatment for new impervious surfaces until a threshold is tripped (refer to CALM introduction), however campus staff are looking for ways to incorporate new technologies into sites that will retain and percolate water. In this light, the southwestern corner of the property could be potential location for a rain garden retention area to treat upstream runoff before it enters Lake Alice.

Natural Communities

DASH Course Woods is comprised primarily of a mesic / upland-mixed forest. Upland mixed forests are characterized as well-developed, closed-canopy forests of upland hardwoods on rolling hills. Upland mixed forests often have limestone or phosphatic rock near the surface and occasionally as outcrops. Soils are generally sandy-clays or clayey sands with substantial organic and often calcareous components. In larger, less strenuous conditions, mesic forests typically support significant wildlife and plant diversity, which result from the nutrient rich nature of hardwood forests and flowering and fruiting plants.

Plant Species

The canopy in this area is comprised of pignut hickory, winged elm, sweet gum, loblolly pine, laurel oak, cabbage palm, slash pine and maple. The understory is relatively undisturbed and contains populations of mint (Collinsonia serotina Walt.) and the vine {Smilax hugeri (Small) Norton ex Pennell}. Neither of these species is listed as endangered or threatened by state or federal environmental agencies, but they are considered rare by many botanists. At present, an inventory of plants on site is not contemplated.

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, cats claw vine, coral ardisia, Glossy Privet, Loquat, English Ivy.

Animal Species
DASH Course Woods is small in size, which limits the amount of habitat for terrestrial species. 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, raccoon, armadillo, gray squirrel, cotton mouse, gray fox, and white-tailed deer. At present, an inventory on mammals, herps, and birds is not contemplated for this area.


Sweetgum and Loblolly Pine in DASH Course Woods

Soils Inventory
In general, mesic upland mixed forests occur on rolling hills that often have limestone or phosphatic rock near the surface and occasionally as outcrops. Soils are generally sandy-clays or clayey sands with substantial organic and often calcareous components. The topography and clayey soils increase surface water runoff, although this is counterbalanced by the moisture retention properties of clays and by the often thick layer of leaf mulch which helps conserve soil moisture and create decidedly mesic conditions (FNAI).

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

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 Recreational Resources
DASH Course Woods functions as forested green space at the northwest corner of campus. The woods are bisected with unmarked footpaths and trails that are used by walkers and mountain bikers. As mentioned previously, there is a pavilion that in the center that can be used as a picnic area.

There is a known archeological site with these woods.

Future Improvements

DASH Course Wood's physical attribute of being an upland forest along with its existing recreational features strongly point towards a Nature Park orientation. Land management activities should include enhancing existing footpaths, planting of trees to increase the forest canopy where pine beetle and hurricanes have opened it up and to manage air-potato vine and other invasive plants. Additionally, habitat enhancements like bird and bat boxes and wildlife friendly plantings should be considered for this site.

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