

STATE FOREST SPOTLIGHT

Archeological History

Newnans Lake is rich in archeologically significant findings. In the spring of 2000, several years of drought exposed much of the lake bed and students from Eastside High School discovered several dugout canoes along the north shore of the lake. The findings led scientists to conduct a large-scale archeological survey which unveiled over one hundred dugout canoes from the lake's bed.

These canoes were mainly constructed out of southern hard pine with lengths ranging from 15 to 31 feet long and were built from 500 to 5,000 years ago.

An interpretive display including a replica dugout canoe is located on Newnans Lake State Forest along the recreational trails at the lake's edge to educate the public on the historical significance of this area.

Love the state forests? So do we!

The Friends of Florida State Forests is a direct-support organization of the Florida Forest Service dedicated to ensuring Florida's state forests are available for future generations to enjoy. Make a difference by joining today to help protect Florida's forests.

Membership dues go to the forests for conservation and improvement projects. To join Friends or for more information, visit:

www.FloridaStateForests.org



Things to Know When Visiting Newnans Lake State Forest

- The forest is only open during daylight hours.
- Pets are welcome but must remain on a leash.
- Do not create new trails.
- Take garbage when you leave the forest, containers are not provided.
- Removal of plants and animals is prohibited.
- Vehicular access is not allowed on the forest.
- Possession of alcoholic beverages is prohibited.
- Take pictures and memories of your visit home with you.

For more information, visit:

www.FDACS.gov/FLStateForests



Florida Forest Service

Newnans Lake State Forest



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND CONSUMER SERVICES



History

Newnans Lake State Forest is named after the large water body located on the east side of the forest, Newnans Lake. This 5,800-acre lake is approximately two miles wide and four miles long. The forest, which is a little over 1,100 acres sits between the east side of Gainesville and the lake. The forest property has been in state ownership since 1921 when 3,000 acres were acquired to establish a community for persons with mental disabilities.

This “Florida Farm Colony” later became the Sunland Training Center, and finally Tacachale Center. Over the years, parts of the 3,000 acre property were transferred to other state and local agencies. In 2015, the Florida Forest Service acquired 1,005 acres of the land to create a State Forest.

Forestry

The Florida Forest Service’s mission is to protect and manage the forest resources of Florida, ensuring that they are available for future generations. The Florida Forest Service manages more than one million acres of state forests for multiple public uses including timber, recreation and wildlife habitat.

Timber management practices on Newnans Lake State Forest are important for the restoration and maintenance of forest ecosystems and provide a variety of benefits to Floridians. Longleaf pine seedlings have been planted in suitable areas on the forest to provide habitat for wildlife and aesthetic value. The trees will supply timber products for generations to come. The use of prescribed fire is an important management tool used on the forest. The prescribed fire program helps to stimulate the recovery of native ground cover and promotes the regeneration of native pines.



Interpretive display by Newnans Lake



Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks



Hiker with grandson

For more information contact:
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Natural Resources

Gum and bald cypress swamps extending from Newnans Lake are the most intact natural systems on the forest. These areas are ideal for wading birds. Bald eagle nests are found in large pine trees near the lake. Sunnyland Creek, Lake Ridge Creek, and Lake Forest Creek flow through the forest into Newnans Lake. The forest is one link in the chain of public lands that runs along the lakeshore and protects this beautiful and historic aquatic feature.

Newnans Lake State Forest contains a variety of upland habitat. The forested uplands are a mix of southern pines, sweetgum, oaks, and hickory. Additionally, several non-forested “old-field” wildlife openings are scattered throughout the forest. This mixture of forested and non-forested cover provides habitat for a wide suite of wildlife including gopher tortoise, deer, turkey, quail, and songbirds.

Recreation

Recreation activities on the forest include hiking, mountain biking, nature study, wildlife viewing and photography. There are three trails on the state forest with two designated trailheads. The West Trailhead is on the west side of State Road 26 and provides parking for visitors hiking the .75-mile loop trail through oak hammock, old field pine and wildlife openings. This trail has interpretive tree and animal identification signs. The Lake Pithlachocco Trailhead is located on the east side of State Road 26 and is the starting point for a 5.5-mile mountain bike loop and a 2.5-mile hiking loop. The Lake Pithlachocco Trails lead to the lake’s shore with the hiking trail being a more direct route. Canoers and Kayakers may launch from public facilities on the lake outside of the state forest boundary, and paddle along the lakeshore into the swamps and streams of the forest.

Newnans Lake State Forest is an Operation Outdoor Freedom (OOF) program site. The forest with the help of staff and volunteers provide hunting opportunities to wounded veterans a couple times a year.