

## **SPLIT OAKS**

### **History:**

Split Oak Forest WEA was acquired in 1994 with funds received through the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Mitigation Park Program. The now-defunct Mitigation Park Program was established in 1998 as an off-site alternative to on-site protection for rare species impacted by development. When developers eliminated habitat for an endangered or threatened species, they paid fees that were used to buy and manage high quality habitat elsewhere.

The area derives its name from a unique squat-trunk oak located on the north side of the property which split into two halves prior to FWC's acquisition. Portions of the property were once used for turpentine and cattle operations. Previous owners cleared approximately 54 acres to create improved pasture along the western boundary, just south of the Clapp Simms Duda Road entrance. Area staff have found evidence of clearing activities associated with a small orange grove (2-4 acres, now fallow), and possible homestead activities in the xeric oak communities just east of the improved pasture.

In the late 1980s, prior to State acquisition, the owners converted 12 acres of scrubby flatwood on the east side of the property into pasture. The effort has left the area with scattered scrub oak varieties with extensive bare ground between oak clusters. Later, 3 basin marshes were excavated to create artificial impoundments for future planned development of the site. The result of the excavations produced 3 large ponds with adjacent large spoil areas.

The management's goal on the area is to restore and maintain the habitats critical to the long-term benefit of state and federally listed upland species, particularly the gopher tortoise. Management tools include prescribed fire, mechanical treatments and chemical treatment of invasive plant species.

### **Section: 9-31**

The residents of Orange County in order to protect the Split Oaks Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area from any future development or construction over it, and in order to maintain the qualities of their air and waters, barred the Orange County Board of County Commissioners from outgoing any constructions permits or development permits or any roads.

1. The residents of Orange County and the State of Florida acquired Split Oaks in 1994 and it is declared as a Land Preservation area.
2. In the creation of this Land Preserve, they created a back door which would allow development of this area.

3. This back door which will allow said development requires a majority vote of the boards of County Commissioners of Orange and Osceola counties to authorize said development.
  
4. That the board of Orange County Commissioners is hereby barred from taking any vote on any request for any construction or development or authorizing defined any permit which allow any construction or development in the boundaries of Split Oaks as defined in their Land Preservation Act.

Proposed by James R. Auffant 10/04/2019