

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners

From: Diane Eggeman, Director, Division of Hunting and Game Management

Date: April 19, 2017

Subject: Staff Report – Upland Ecosystem Restoration Project

Purpose:

To provide an annual update to the Commissioners on the Upland Ecosystem Restoration Project.

Summary:

Dr. Bill Palmer, President, CEO, and Director of Research at Tall Timbers Research Station, along with Mr. Jim Karels, Director/State Forester with the Florida Forest Service, will present this report.

The Upland Ecosystem Restoration Project (UERP) is a multi-partner strategic planning effort to integrate management actions needed to sustain upland ecosystems in Florida. This project bolsters existing conservation efforts among land management agencies by implementing new management actions and monitoring outcomes. UERP is a cooperative partnership between Tall Timbers Research Station, state and federal agencies, the University of Florida, and numerous conservation groups. The primary objective of UERP is to improve management of priority upland ecosystems outlined in Florida's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy and specifically to encourage recovery of diverse grassland habitats over relatively large areas to increase densities of declining wildlife species. This is being accomplished by implementing 1 to 2 year fire frequencies, reducing extent of fire, and reducing overstory when necessary to recover ground story vegetation. Current public lands projects exceed 70,000 acres and 5 of the 7 UERP sites have achieved target fire frequencies and significant vegetation management (roller chopping, hardwood removal, and timber harvests) has occurred on over 6,000 acres. UERP is strengthened by steering committees composed of agency leaders and technical experts, and support from public and private sources.

Staff Recommendation:

This agenda item is for information only.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Diane Eggeman, Director, Division of Hunting and Game Management