



WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PLAN GREAT SATILLA PRESERVE

AUGUST 2020

Wildlife Management Plan

Great Satilla Preserve

Preamble:

The Great Satilla Preserve was established in 2006 with approximately 2000 acres held in a Conservation Easement and owned / managed by the Great Satilla Preserve Property Owners Association. The primary function of the “Easement” is to provide incentive for protecting the natural environment and the relatively natural habitat of fish, wildlife, plants, and similar ecosystems. In return for overseeing the protection of the Preserve, members of the GSP Property Owners Association have the privilege of access for the enjoyment of and usage for recreational purposes such as fishing, hunting, biking, hiking, horseback riding, 4-wheeling, etc.

Wildlife Protection:

At the core of protecting the relative natural habitat is to manage the property for the propagation of various species of wildlife that are indigenous to the habitat. Common indigenous species that might live in or transit this property include racoons, opossums, foxes, coyotes, bears, armadillos, deer, squirrels, ducks, and wild turkeys. Several of these species are hunted for their table fare and are further protected by state and federal game laws. Although misunderstood by some, hunting is an extremely effective tool in the conservation and protection of many species of wildlife.

Wildlife Management:

An effective wildlife management plan supports compliance with the rules and regulations governing the conservation easement and maximizes the potential for recreational enjoyment including hunting by members of GSP POA.

Wildlife Management Plan:

While beneficial to many species, the Wildlife Management Plan is designed primarily to maximize the whitetail deer population for hunting purposes. Secondly, the plan includes practices that benefit wild turkeys, ducks, dove and quail for hunting and conservation purposes. Additional benefits that will be achieved include habitat improvement for many non-game species, including gopher tortoise, the eastern indigo snake, and the eastern diamondback rattlesnake.

1. **Forestry Management** – A separate forestry management plan has been adopted for the benefit of habitat as well as revenue generation for the POA. The plan includes:
 - A. Best practice for harvesting mature pine stands,
 - B. Re-establishment of long leaf pines where practical and loblolly / slash pine stands in the less suitable areas,
 - C. Routine thinning as pine stands mature and
 - D. Routine “prescribed fire” to control the woody and waxy understories, encourage tree growth, and encourage growth of more desirable understory vegetation communities.
 - **Harvest Areas** – Areas that have been harvested and replanted offer significant nutritional value to whitetail deer and other wildlife as forbs, grasses and other easily digested vegetation reclaim the forest floor.
 - **Thinning** – Areas that have been thinned also provide increased nutritional value to deer and other wildlife as more sunlight is available for the forbs, grasses, and other vegetation.
 - **Prescribed Fire** – A prescribed fire program is the most economical method for providing nutritional value to deer and other wildlife. Prescribed fires reduce woody plant encroachment and are beneficial for many native plant species in a way mechanical and chemical management treatment cannot duplicate. Wildlife, both game and

nongame species, also benefit from prescribed fires which results in new plant growth and restoration of habitats which they use both for both food and cover.

- **Mowing** – Although somewhat less economical than prescribed burns, mowing the understories and between rows of planted pines is beneficial to wildlife as it also reduces woody plant encroachment and encourages new plant growth. For young slash and loblolly stands that cannot yet tolerate a prescribed burn, mowing provides a productive alternative. With young longleaf pines that may have missed early burns due to candling, mowing is a great tool to reduce fuel loads near the young trees
2. **Food Plots and Wildlife Openings** – Food plots can be an important source of nutrition for deer and other wildlife but requires additional effort and financial resources. A good rule of thumb is for at least 10% of the managed property to be planted in food plots or fallow openings, although 20% is significantly better. Although many options exist, wheat and oats are the most economical food plot plants while offering adequate nutritional value.
 3. **Early Succession Vegetation Areas** - A less costly option is to allow a portion of fields to develop into Early Succession Vegetation areas. This low-cost option provides improved cover for fawns and game bird poults, in addition to providing high value nutritional plants. Early successional vegetation areas should be manipulated every two to three years via herbicide treatments, winter mowing or dormant season disking, to reduce competition from woody species. *It is essential to avoid vegetation disturbance to these areas in late spring/early summer to avoid conflicts with fawns and young game birds.*
 4. **Roadsides and Firebreaks** – Roadsides and firebreaks should be routinely mowed and may be planted to offer additional nutrition for deer and other wildlife.

5. **Supplemental Feeding** – Supplemental feeding with corn, peanuts, protein pellets, etc. is beneficial but comes with greater financial cost. Supplemental feeding should be done using gravity or trough-type feeders that are inaccessible to hogs. *The use of spin feeders and other methods that apply corn, etc. directly to the ground is discouraged to minimize the negative impact of hogs.*
6. **Quality Deer Management** – The genetics of the whitetail deer in coastal Georgia and the limited nutritional value of native vegetation negatively impacts the opportunity for body and antler growth. However, a well-executed quality deer management program focused on the following three activities can maximize the potential for body and antler growth.

- A. **enhance nutrition** on a year-round basis through habitat improvement and food plots.
- B. **balance adult sex ratios** through harvesting does and reducing pressure on bucks.
- C. **protect immature bucks** to give them a chance to reach physical maturity.

7. **Schedule of Wildlife Management Plan Activities**

- A. January – February: Prescribed burns, soil testing
- B. March – April: Prescribed burns, lime application, mow/disc food plots.
- C. June: Plant Dove Field
- D. August: Prep food plots (Mowing / Herbicide / Fertilization)
- E. September - October: Plant food plots
- F. November-December: Fire break preparation. Roadside/Early Successional Vegetation Area manipulation as needed.

GSP FOOD PLOTS

Boundary Road and Settlers Way open year round. All other roads closed to hunter's access only during deer season and turkey season.



Map Legend

- Boundary Road (open all year)
- Settlers Way, etc. (open all year)
- Hunter's Access Only during Deer & Turkey Season
- Food Plot
- Boat Ramp
- Deer Shun n Shee
- Bow Hunt Only Area (East of Boones Lake)
- Shooting Range (Closest 4:30p - 9:30a during Deer & Turkey Seasons)