

Notice No. 2009-012

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Map No. 09-Apalachicola West, 10-Apalachicola East, 15-Osceola, 19-Ocala North, 20-Ocala South, 25-Cross Fla Greenway East
Perm. Change? Yes
Effective Date 09/01/2009
Ending Date

Description

The National Forests in Florida has issued the following bear-food storage policy. This policy is in effect for all three national forests in Florida – Apalachicola, Ocala and Osceola.

Tallahassee, FL – To prevent bears and other wildlife from becoming problems at popular recreation areas in the Ocala, Osceola and Apalachicola National Forests, the U.S. Forest Service recently implemented a forest-wide Food Storage policy requiring proper storage and disposal of food, garbage and other attractants.

The policy, which took effect June 30, requires all forest visitors to properly store, possess or secure food, garbage and other attractants so that they are not easily accessible to wildlife. Attractants include anything having an odor that may attract bears, such as food, beverages, cooking grease, toothpaste, toiletries, soap, game meat, pet food, livestock feed or garbage.

According to the policy, all food, garbage and attractants must be properly stored in bear-resistant containers or hard-sided vehicles, or properly disposed of in bear-resistant trash receptacles. Items may also be suspended in “food hangs” at least 10 feet above the ground [and at least 4 feet from the trunk of a tree]. Burning or burying any food, garbage or attractants are prohibited.

The U.S. Forest Service has taken additional measures by installing bear-resistant trash receptacles at recreation areas and ordering bear resistant dumpsters for a number of camping areas.

Visitors who do not follow the order can be fined.

With increased outdoor activities, it is not uncommon for visitors to occasionally observe various animals, especially Florida Black Bears. There are an estimated 2,000 black bears living in the National Forests in Florida, with the Ocala National Forest’s Juniper Wilderness area consisting of the highest concentration.

Visitors and forest residents should take the actions listed above to prevent bear problems and alert the campground host or District Ranger Offices if a bear is present in or around camping and recreation areas. Most often, if attractants are removed, bears will move on and not return.

A full version of this policy statement and a Bear Aware Fact Sheet can be found at:<http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/florida/documents/news/08-25-09.php>

For more information on Florida black bears, visit <http://www.MyFWC.com/bear>.