Meeting the needs of present and future generations

For over a century, the USDA Forest Service (FS) has worked to protect and restore public forests and grasslands to provide the goods and services that society needs. While these benefits expand beyond FS boundaries, recent changes in land and water use, habitat fragmentation, and climate change are altering the landscape surrounding our Nation’s forests and will affect future resource utilization and access that users enjoy today.

Connecting with partners and the public

New approaches to resource management

The Francis Marion National Forest (NF) is one of three NFs in the Southern Region currently revising its land and resource management plan. As many of the adjacent private lands are important to the resources within the forest boundaries, forest planners are working with partners across the South Atlantic to identify common priorities and coordinate with existing planning efforts. Working together, managers and planners can draw on the collective knowledge of the South Atlantic LCC and use existing information to plan for the future.

Preparing for change

Understanding the potential impacts

Population growth and sea level rise are just two issues challenging forest planners. The expanding footprint of development will put additional pressure on the forest to deliver services. Declining water quantity and sea level rise will, in turn, put aquatic resources at risk because less water is available to sustain them. In order to respond to these changes, planners at the Francis Marion NF are using modeling tools, like the Sea Level Affecting Marshes Model (SLAMM) and projected urban growth data, to better understand how dynamic ecosystems may respond to future change.
Supporting an “All Lands” Approach
Identifying priority areas for management action

The Conservation Blueprint 1.0 is the South Atlantic LCC’s first attempt at a science-based, community-informed, living plan that depicts the places and actions needed to sustain resources in the face of future change. In draft version 1.0, the land immediately surrounding, and including, the Francis Marion NF were identified as a “high priority.” High priority areas represent the best opportunities for groups to work together for a variety of benefits—to biodiversity, water, working lands, and the economy through voluntary conservation measures.

Tools for Conservation Action
Land & Water Management

Some of the Blueprints more ambitious recommendations were focused on management practices on currently unprotected lands adjacent to public lands. For instance, the high priority areas identified within the blueprint could be used to link similar regional management goals to specific sites, such as increasing longleaf pine habitat on private lands in and around the Francis Marion NF by implementing a cost-share program to local landowners and increasing prescribed fire treatments.

Land & Water Protection

The Blueprint identifies the Francis Marion NF as a significant landscape for longleaf pine restoration through linking conservation efforts in the mid- and Atlantic Coastal Plain ecoregions to the Sandhills.

Education & Awareness

The Blueprint highly encourages raising environmental awareness across the region. Many of the priority areas identified within the Francis Marion NF would enhance opportunities for trail connections to other trails and parks—and strengthen the local economy through tourism.

Creating a Conservation Lands Network
Supporting new approaches to resources management

A key objective of the Conservation Blueprint is to identify and cultivate a network of conservation partners that can work together to promote collaborative action across the larger landscape. As part of this network, National Forests are helping to identify, protect, and restore critical habitat while maintaining the viability of working lands. While the exact conditions of future change remain uncertain, actions taken now can minimize potential negative impacts and unlock new opportunities.