Objective-based Vegetation Management Program
Division of Habitat and Species Conservation/Terrestrial Habitat Conservation and Restoration
Success! But serious challenges ahead!
GOAL: Implement a management approach that
- emphasizes maintaining and restoring natural plant communities towards pre-determined desired conditions and
- Monitoring progress towards that goal.
Balance those management goals with ensuring specific habitat requirements are met for imperiled species.
Outcome oriented – long-term monitoring of progress towards a set of predetermined desired conditions

Management objective - restore pasture to historic scrubby flatwoods

**Scrubby Flatwoods DFCs**

- Canopy Cover: < 20%
- Ave. Max Shrub Height: < 9 Ft.
- Total Shrub Cover: < 50%
- Palmetto Cover: < 40%
- Herb. Cover: ≥ 20%
- Wiry Graminoids: ≥ 15%
- Bare Ground: ≥ 10-50%
- Exotics: 0

*Florida scrub jay*
Objective-based Vegetation Management (OBVM)

An approach to land management that is based upon

- Setting **clear, measurable objectives** for habitat management;
- Conducting routine monitoring;
- Tracking our management activities;
- Applying results of monitoring; and
- Adapting management practices.
Key concepts make OBVM a unique approach to land management

- Distinguish plant communities within the landscape that are ‘actively managed’
- Set measureable desired plant community conditions
- Set management Unit boundaries permanently
- Track management actions for specific management unit
- Link monitoring feedback to management units and actions
We distinguish plant communities within the landscape that are ‘actively managed’

Plant communities, such as mesic flatwoods or scrub

OBVM brings key concepts to FWC land management
Structural attributes are used to distinguish among plant community types. These set the “sideboards” within which more specific objectives are identified.

We set measurable desired conditions for ‘actively managed’ plant communities.

Desired conditions are measurable vegetation parameters.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Mesic Flatwoods</strong></th>
<th><strong>Scrubby Flatwoods</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basal area: 10-70 sq. ft. per ac.</td>
<td>Basal area: 10-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrub height and cover:</td>
<td>Shrub height and cover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;6’: 25-75% cover</td>
<td>&lt;7’: 35-75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmetto height and cover:</td>
<td>Palmetto height and cover:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;4’, 25-75% cover</td>
<td>4’, 25-75% cover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiry graminoid cover: 25-75%</td>
<td>Wiry graminoid cover: 10-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbaceous cover: 25-75%</td>
<td>Herbaceous cover: 5-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weedy elements: &lt;1% cover</td>
<td>Weedy elements: &lt;1% cover</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Dry Prairie</strong></th>
<th><strong>Scrub</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tree stem density: 0</td>
<td>Canopy Cover: &lt;20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrub height and cover:</td>
<td>Shrub height: 3’-9’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;3’: 25-75% cover</td>
<td>Bare ground: 10-30% cover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiry graminoid cover: 25-75%</td>
<td>Weedy elements: &lt;1% cover</td>
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**Triple N Ranch ‘Desired Future Conditions’**
Spirit of the Wild WMA Management Units

Boundaries are set permanently to track actions and outcomes

Management Units are permanently delineated
The Management Activity Database stores management actions long term. Track management actions related to a specific management unit.
Tracking land management activities and their monitored outcomes feeds into advanced GIS tools designed to evaluate progress towards management objectives.

- Allows land managers to fine tune their management practices (i.e. prescribed burning) to meet the desired conditions for
  - specific management units and
  - the plant community across the property

Link monitoring feedback to management units and actions

Two levels of monitoring – Management Unit and Plant Community Levels
Querying Monitoring data through GIS
OBVM monitoring data and updates to baseline natural community maps provides a large scale picture of progress towards FWC’s desired land management outcomes.
FWC plans to spend $500 - $800 K per year to apply OBVM. 2007 monitoring is estimated to run ~$55/point for our management unit level sampling.
Benefits of OBVM’s key concepts

- Quantifying desired plant community conditions coupled with routine monitoring data provide managers with enhanced decision support and accountability for habitat management.

- Considering how the plant community responds to management actions supports adaptive management responses
More Benefits

- Summarized results provide managers with quantitative evaluation and visual representation through graphic display of vegetation structure across a management unit and a community providing spatially explicit information.

- Allows a consistent and long term form of habitat and landscape level evaluation measured against a set of steady measurable objectives.
Objective-based Vegetation Management

FWC undertakes an alternative approach to resource management on FWC Wildlife Management Areas

The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), has lead management responsibility for approximately 1.35 million acres on 40 Wildlife Management and Wildlife Environmental Areas (WMAs/WEAs) in Florida. FWC land managers, in cooperation with the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI), have developed and are implementing an objective-based vegetation management (OBVM) approach to resource management on these Trustee-owned lands. OBVM, when fully implemented, should improve operational efficiency and natural resource product delivery. This approach supports science-based land management decisions by setting clear, measurable management objectives for existing and historic natural communities, taking management actions towards achieving those objectives, and methodically monitoring vegetation response at set intervals. OBVM quantifies the present and desired natural community and habitat conditions on managed areas, incorporates a monitoring program to provide feedback on management actions, supports adaptive management strategies and supplies FWC with decision support and accountability for land management decisions.

www.MyFWC.com/OBVM