



A History of Florida Forests

Barry Walsh

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Five hundred years ago, when Ponce de Leon landed on the shores of Florida, 27 million acres of virgin timber--chiefly longleaf, slash pine and large areas of cypress, loblolly pine, sand pine, palms, and oaks--covered the land that constitutes the state today. Of the 15 million acres now forested, 12 million are privately held. This lively, 500-year history of Florida's forests begins before the Spaniards colonized the state, when Native American tribes felled trees to build shelters and canoes, carve ritual masks and weapons, and make firewood. These tribes revered Florida's forests; they understood the dangers of wildfires set by lightning and were careful when burning underbrush to improve forage or aid in the hunt. Their closeness to nature and dependence on forests for their way of life made Native Americans Florida's first "forest managers."

Florida historian Baynard Kendrick offers first-person accounts by the people who explored, logged, reforested, and managed Florida's forests. His chapters feature correspondence from conquistadors as well as memoirs by early settlers, loggers, and mill operators whose work triggered a forest conservation movement in the 1920s. Commissioned by the Florida Board of Forestry in 1966 on the eve of the environmental era, Kendrick's manuscript--titled "Florida's Perpetual Forests"--went unpublished for four decades. Barry Walsh has picked up where Kendrick left off, making this the first book to fully document Florida's forest history through the modern day. Enlightening and accessible to a broad audience, this book will appeal to historians, conservationists, foresters, agricultural leaders, archaeologists, anthropologists, legislators, and many more.

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