

History

Local legend has it that in 1875, a farmer by the name of Cebe Tate, armed with only a shotgun and accompanied by his hunting dogs, journeyed into the swamp in search of a panther that was killing his livestock. Tate became lost in the swamp for several days, was bitten by a snake, and was drinking from the murky waters. Finally he came to a clearing near Carrabelle, living only long enough to murmur the words, "My name is Cebe Tate, and I just came from Hell!" Since then the area has been known as Tate's Hell.

In the early 1950s, under ownership of private forest production companies, attempts were made to drain Tate's Hell swamp in order to grow trees. They later learned that draining the freshwater from the swamp into East Bay seriously affected the marine condition of the Bay and its estuaries.

In 1994 the first land was purchased by the state to help protect the aquatic and estuarine resources of East Bay by securing the watersheds and upland buffers of the Tate's Hell Swamp.

Forestry

The Florida Forest Service manages these lands using a multiple-use concept, which balances recreation, wildlife and timber with environmental values. Tate's Hell is a working forest that strives to "earn its keep" while protecting wetlands and native habitats for the enjoyment of future generations. Sound forest management promotes forest health and restoration on thousands of acres of savannah and swamp that were altered over the last century.

Prescribed fire is carefully applied to reduce the risk of wildfire and to promote the fire-evolved native Florida landscape often associated with longleaf pine and wiregrass.

Tate's Hell is a green buffer to the adjacent bays and salt marshes. By restoring the hydrology and native plant communities, a steady flow of clean water flows to coastal fish nurseries to replenish the Gulf.

Tate's Hell State Forest is best known for its large expanse of swampland. The natural vegetation of the wetland swamps functions as a filter for water entering the Apalachicola Bay and East Bay. The Apalachicola River and East Bay are designated as Outstanding Florida Waters.