



UPLAND RESOURCE PROTECTION

Introduction

On January 30, 2006 the New Unified Land Development Code (ULDC, http://growth-management.alachua.fl.us/ldr/chapters/ULDC_AlaCo_FinalAdopt.pdf) went into effect in Alachua County following adoption by the Board of County Commissioners on 12.8.2005. The new ULDC recognizes the need to protect, maintain and enhance the native biodiversity of natural ecological communities in Alachua County, as well as the quality of life of our citizens. Several sections of the ULDC address the need for protection of **upland habitat**, including:

- Chapter 406, Article 2, Trees and Native Vegetation,
- Chapter 406, Article 3, Significant Plant and Wildlife Habitat,
- Chapter 406, Article 4, Listed Plant and Animal Species Habitat, and
- Chapter 406, Article 5, Strategic Ecosystems.

In addition, the ULDC identifies two Special Area Studies (SAS), the Cross Creek Village (Chapter 405, Article 4) and Idylwild/Serenola (Chapter 405, Article 5) that require additional protection. This brochure will briefly describe each section and provide guidance on the code requirements for preservation of upland habitat. The applicant is encouraged to read the appropriate sections of the ULDC or call the Environmental Protection Department at 352-264-6800 for additional information.

Trees and Native Vegetation (Chapter 406, Article 2)



Any development activity should take into consideration tree preservation. **Clearing of vegetation is prohibited prior to obtaining a permit.** Regulated trees include Champion trees, Heritage trees, woody native tree species 8" or more in diameter at breast height (DBH), and specimen trees of significant value to the natural system (please refer to Chapter 406,

Article 2 for a complete list). Applicants are required to have a pre-design, on-site meeting with the county arborist (352-384-3086), code enforcement director (352-374-5244), or their designee, to locate any champion trees or heritage trees. **A tree removal permit must be obtained from the Alachua County Office of Codes Enforcement prior to any vegetation removal.** The applicant may be required to relocate any trees proposed for removal or replace the removed trees with other trees planted elsewhere on site (a list of appropriate tree plantings is available in the code, Table 407.50.1). Exempt developments include: residential parcels 2 acres or less with no impacts to champion or heritage trees, and bona fide agricultural activities, other than forestry, which maintain heritage trees within 50 feet of property ownership boundaries or within 100 feet of all publicly owned parks and have no impacts to champion trees. Special requirements apply to properties in Idylwild/Serenola SAS.

Significant Plant and Wildlife Habitat (Chapter 406, Article 3)

Significant plant and wildlife habitat includes natural upland plant communities which have the potential to maintain healthy and diverse populations of plants or wildlife. All developments shall protect significant plant and wildlife habitat that occurs on site, and up to 25% of the upland portion of the project area may be required to be set aside. The habitat to be conserved shall be selected based on its uniqueness,



quality and viability. In particular, conserved habitat shall be located and maintained in areas with intact canopy, understory and groundcover, in functional, clustered arrangement that maximizes use by wildlife and maintains the long-term viability of native upland plant communities. Linkages to habitat corridors and greenways shall be required where available. The County shall work with the landowner to select the portion of the habitat that will be included in the set aside area.

Listed Plant and Animal Species Habitat (Chapter 406, Article 4)



Listed Species Habitats are areas that contain biological or physical features upon which a listed species depends. The use of this habitat will be restricted to activities that are compatible with listed species. Development activities that would threaten the life or habitat of any listed species are not permitted (See [Article 4, Ch. 406](#) for limitations and restrictions). **Development activities on all parcels greater than or equal to two**

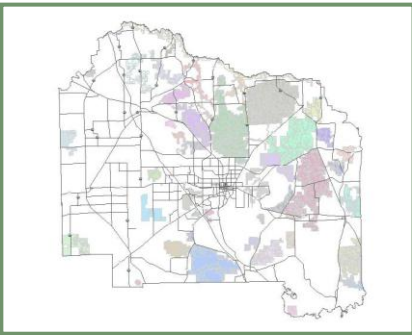
acres in size shall be evaluated for the protection of listed species habitat prior to clearing, grading, or other alteration of the habitat.

Onsite preservation of critical habitat may be required and up to 25% of the upland portion of the project area may be required to be set aside. The County may consult with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) or other appropriate agencies prior to the approval of any development proposals, change in zoning or land use, and issuance of any development permits that could result in potential adverse impacts to any threatened or endangered species, or species of special concern. The County may utilize these recommendations to provide specific requirements regarding development where these species are encountered.

Strategic Ecosystems (Chapter 406, Article 5)

Strategic ecosystems are communities that have the potential to promote connectivity and minimize fragmentation of natural systems, and to protect wetlands, floodplains, and associated uplands in a broad systems context through resource-based planning across multiple parcels rather than on an individual parcel basis. The strategic ecosystem communities were identified and mapped by KBN/Golder Associates in their report, “Alachua County Ecological Inventory Project” (1996) and map available at www.growth-management.alachua.fl.us/gis/gis_mapatlas.php.

If a property lies within a strategic ecosystem, up to 50% of the **upland** (not including wetlands and surface waters) portion of a parcel associated with a development may be required to be preserved without landowner consent (the area can be greater with landowner consent).



A field investigation is necessary to determine the specific location and extent of strategic ecosystem resources, and to select the portion of the resources, if any, that shall be permanently preserved.

The portion selected for preservation is based on several factors including: 1. Native biodiversity within or across natural ecological communities, ecological integrity, rarity, and functional connectedness with other communities; 2. Plant and animal species habitat that is documented for listed species and species with large home ranges, and habitat that is a special wildlife migration or aggregation site for activities such as breeding, roosting, colonial nesting, or over-wintering, high in vegetation quality and species diversity, and low in non-native invasive species; and 3. Size, shape, and landscape features that allow the ecosystem to be restored to, or maintained in, good condition with regular management activities, such as prescribed burning, removal of exotic vegetation, or hydrological restoration.

Where the strategic ecosystem is greater than 50% of the upland portion of the parcel, development on any portion of the strategic ecosystem outside the set-aside area may be subject to restrictions to minimize the overall impact to ecosystem integrity. A management plan may also be necessary to ensure the long-term protection of the ecological integrity of the strategic ecosystem.

Parcels bordering or within 660 ft of a strategic ecosystem that has been designated as Preservation/Conservation in the Future Land Use map may also be subject to restrictions, including preservation of a 100 ft corridor adjacent to the strategic ecosystem in its natural state.

The Alachua County 2001 digital orthophotographic series shall presumptively establish the baseline condition of the property as of the effective date of this policy. Any unauthorized alterations or adverse impacts to a strategic ecosystem will be considered a violation and restoration or other on-site mitigation shall be required.

Cross Creek Village and Idylwild/Serenola (Ch. 405, Articles 4-5)

The Cross Creek and Idylwild/Serenola Special Area Studies were implemented to establish general policies and development guidelines to ensure that future land development is designed to place the environmental integrity of this area in the forefront of all development proposals. These areas contain numerous environmentally sensitive areas and several development restrictions may apply. Owners interested in developing property within a study area should contact the Alachua County Environmental Protection Department (352-264-6800) for additional information.

Summary

The protection of Alachua county's upland communities is an essential element of maintaining a healthy and diverse landscape. Alachua county is very fortunate to have a variety of upland communities, including sandhills, scrub, xeric and mesic hammocks, slope forest, upland pine forest, dry prairies, mesic flatwood and scrubby flatwood. These ecosystems provide valuable habitat for native plant and wildlife species, and serve as buffers and ecological networks linking other natural communities such as wetlands and surface waters. To learn more about these and other natural communities, visit our website at: <http://www.alachuacounty.us/epd>



Economic development and protection of the natural environment do not have to be viewed as mutually exclusive goals. As citizens of Alachua County we can all work towards

“sustainable development” to ensure that the natural resources supporting the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Alachua County are managed and maintained for future generations. Please contact Alachua County's Environmental Protection Department (352-264-6800) prior to any development activity (including agricultural activities) on your property, and we will be happy to visit your site, provide recommendations, and help you understand the new regulations so that we all can help protect and enjoy our upland resources in Alachua County.



FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT:
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