

*Appropriate Agencies
Address*

Re: Alachua County Waterways Master Plan

Dear _____,

On January 22, 2008 the Alachua County Commission received the Waterways Master Plan Report prepared by the University of Florida. The Commission asked the UF team to make recommendations for the sustainable recreational and commercial use of the County's major surface waters using input from residents and stakeholder groups. As part of the Board's action on the many report recommendations was the request to have a letter sent to appropriate agencies regarding recommendations 6a-d, f, 8a-b, and 15a-b. The referenced recommendations state:

- Recommendation 6a: Determine how to practically measure noise from motorized watercraft.
- Recommendation 6b: Determine the extent to which noise from motorized watercraft, particularly airboats, impacts Alachua County shore side residents and wildlife.
- Recommendation 6c: At a minimum, strictly enforce the existing State noise statute and the County's noise ordinance of 90dB at 50 feet for boats and watercraft.
- Recommendation 6d: Mechanical and sound level tests/inspections should be conducted more frequently at boat ramps, as watercraft enter the water.
- Recommendation 6f: Encourage government entities that operate airboats on Alachua County waterways to set an example by (1) incorporating technology and design features that reduce noise impacts and (2) training operators on proper and respectful behavior while on the water.
- Recommendation 8a: Increase law enforcement presence on the County's high use water bodies, particularly on weekends and holidays.
- Recommendation 8b: Increase collaboration and coordination between law enforcement entities (e.g., the Alachua County Sheriff's Office and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Division of Law Enforcement) and, in particular, between Alachua County and its neighboring counties.
- Recommendation 15a: Determine the effects of water quality on fish populations.
- Recommendation 15b: Determine the effects of fishing pressure on fish populations at various times of the year.
- Recommendation 17a: Educate waterway users and residents about invasive/exotic vegetation.
- Recommendation 17b: As an alternative to herbicide spraying, implement "eco-friendly" harvesting methods to remove invasive/exotic vegetation.

In addition to the above recommendations the County Commission asked County staff to respond to the following recommendations:

- Recommendation 4d: Educate the public about proper procedures to follow when using boat ramps.
- Recommendation 6e: Consider as a more restrictive option than Recommendations 6c or 6d, the imposition of a nighttime curfew for airboats. Current regulations would not likely allow for signage of a curfew not based on safety. Thus, if a curfew is desired, the most defensible approach would be to enact it on entire water bodies or countywide
- Recommendation 7a: Educate user groups on boating behaviors, etiquette, and technology that can minimize noise impacts from motorized vessels.
- Recommendation 13a: Post signs at boat ramps that explain existing regulations and contain contact information for law enforcement agencies.

The County Commission asked staff to further investigate Recommendation 6e and to recommend what form/format a curfew might take. Staff is to consider all types of uses that may be impacted such as hunting, frog gigging, night fishing, night use for livelihood, and any others.

The Alachua County Commission and staff would appreciate your insight, comments, suggestions, and available information pertaining to the above Waterways Master Plan recommendations. To better understand the report recommendations and the Commission's actions it would be beneficial for you to review the complete Waterways Master Plan. You can view the Master Plan at the following websites:

- <http://www.alachuawaterways.org/>
- <http://www.alachuacounty.us/documents/bocc/agendas/2008-01-22/62E0BA57-D767-4467-9DE7-35DC9EC7CC38Agenda.htm> (See item #24)

Your response should be directed to Mr. Robert Avery, Parks Superintendent., at P.O. Box 1188, Gainesville, FL, 32602-1188. If you have any questions or want to discuss this request please contact Mr. Avery at 352-374-5245 ext. 247 or e-mail him at ravery@alachuacounty.us.

The County Commission looks forward to your response to the Waterways Master Plan recommendations as outlined above.

Sincerely

Rodney J. Long, Chairman
Alachua County Commission