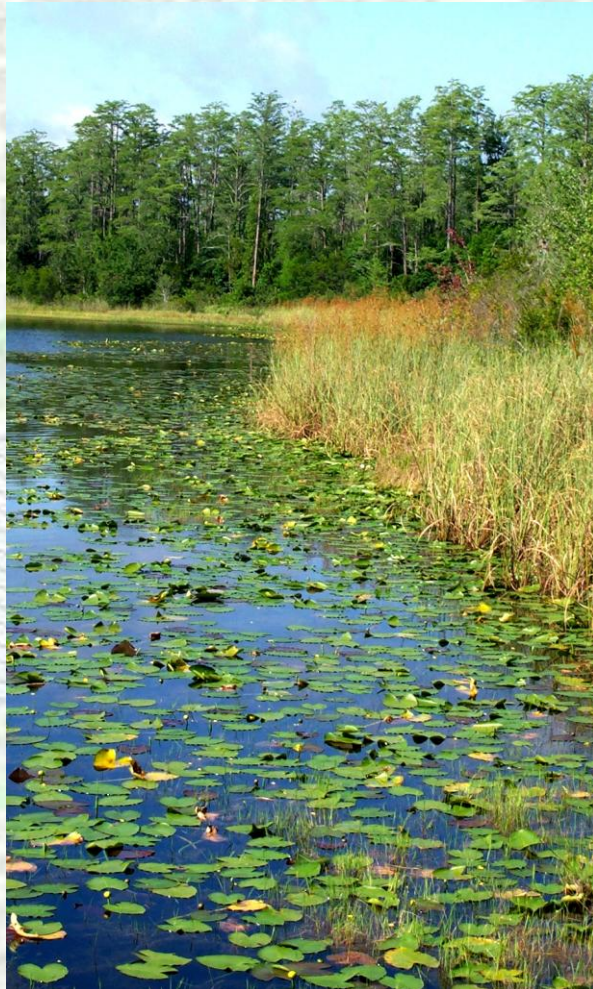


Surface Waters and Wetlands



A marsh and forested lake fringe.

Buffers

Buffers enhance wetland structure and function and are integral to the maintenance of surface waters and wetlands. They are also a connecting corridor for the movement of wildlife from one ecosystem to another.



Buffers, shown in green, are required around all surface water and wetland areas (blue).

Introduction

In order to protect open bodies of water, flowing streams, and wetland areas, the Surface Waters and Wetlands Ordinance, Chapter 406, Article 6 of the Alachua County Code, was established in 1992.

Surface waters are all waters found on the land surface. This includes lakes, ponds, creeks, springs and wetlands. Wetlands are areas where water inundates or saturates the land long enough to support plants and animals adapted to life in wet conditions. Wetlands are a type of surface water. Some surface waters are all wetlands. Some surface waters have no associated wetlands.

The line demarcating the landward extent of Surface Waters and Wetlands is established using State of Florida methodology found in Florida Administrative Code, Chapter 62-340.

Surface waters and wetlands provide many services which include flood storage and conveyance, water quality and supply functions, and fish and wildlife habitat.

Surface Waters and Wetlands



A dozer illegally clears vegetation on a lake. This is an example of a prohibited development activity.

Prohibited Development

No alterations can occur in a surface water, wetland and associated buffer without prior development approval. Alterations are anything that would modify the structure and function in a surface water, wetland or buffer and can include excavating, filling or land clearing. Wetlands structure and function is all the physical, chemical and biological processes occurring in and making up a wetland ecosystem.



Un-permitted ditching in a wetland

Development Approval

Development approval may not be granted until certain criteria have been met. These criteria include a demonstration that alternatives and modifications to avoid or minimize impacts have been determined to be infeasible. If impacts are unavoidable, mitigation may be permitted to compensate for wetland losses only where such mitigation will restore lost wetland structure and function.

Any questions?

If you are planning any development in an area you think might be in a wetland, or if you have any questions about surface waters and wetlands give us a call at 264-6800.

Or contact us at:

Environmental Protection Department
201 SE 2nd Ave., Suite 201
Gainesville, FL 32601
(352) 264-6800

<http://www.alachuacounty.us/epd>