

Objective 5.3 Emeraldal Marsh Rural Protection Area

The County hereby establishes the Emeraldal Marsh Rural Protection Area, encompassing lands south of the Marion County line between Lake Griffin and Lake Yale, west of Umatilla, east of Lady Lake and Fruitland Park, and north of State Road 44, as depicted on the Future Land Use Map. This Rural Protection Area is intended to preserve rural density, character, and lifestyles, and to protect the ecological integrity of public and private lands associated with Emeraldal Marsh, Sawgrass Island Preserve, Lake Griffin, Lake Yale, and the Ocklawaha River.

Policy 5.3.1 Importance of the Emeraldal Marsh Rural Protection Area

~~The centerpiece of this Rural Protection Area is Emeraldal Marsh. The Emeraldal Marsh, including its waters, wetlands, floodplain, and pasture, is a natural resource of unique value to Lake County and has been federally designated as a National Natural Landmark. Comprised of public and private lands located between Lake Yale and Lake Griffin, the Emeraldal Marsh area supports a unique mosaic of wildlife habitat, functions as an important bird rookery, and provides regional ecosystem connectivity to the Ocklawaha River system and Ocala National Forest. Similarly, Sawgrass Island Preserve provides a valuable wildlife sanctuary on Lake Yale. Within the Emeraldal Marsh Rural Protection Area, private land use is largely characterized by agrarian and equestrian-oriented activities that represent a valuable part of the history, culture, and lifestyle of rural Lake County.~~

Policy 5.3.1-5.3.7 Coordinate ~~ion~~ with state and local ~~e~~Conservation ~~A~~gencies

The County shall coordinate with state and local conservation agencies, including but not limited to the SJRWMD and Lake County Water Authority, regarding natural resource issues that affect the health of the Emeraldal Marsh ecosystem. These efforts ~~shall include coordination on water quality, water supply, flood control measures, and the relationship between such activities and the sustainability of wildlife and waterfowl habitat, as well as public access and management of preserve lands including Sawgrass Island Preserve and conservation lands held by the SJRWMD, may involve coordination on issues affecting the protection and management of wildlife, habitat, and natural communities; public access and management of preserved areas; water quality and flood control (including the relationship between such activities and waterfowl habitat), control of exotic species, silviculture activities, and prescribed fire.~~

Policy 5.3.2-5.3.6 Support Land Acquisition ~~within the EMPA and Conservation Easements~~

~~The County, through its bonded natural lands acquisition program and in coordination with state programs such as the Florida Communities Trust, shall support ongoing efforts to protect environmentally sensitive lands within the EMPA for permanent preservation through fee simple purchase or less than fee conservation easements. Lake County shall support, assist and actively encourage public land acquisition and conservation easements as appropriate in order to protect environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife corridors within the Emeraldal Marsh RPA. The County shall utilize revenue bonds from the Lake County Land Acquisition program and partner to the greatest extent possible with federal, state and local governments and agencies, and with private non-profit conservation organizations as appropriate, to achieve this purpose.~~

Policy 5.3.3-5.3.4 Protection of Wetlands

Wetland impacts, including the depositing of fill in wetlands, shall be prohibited within the ~~EMPA~~ Emeraldal Marsh RPA, except as necessary to provide for legal ingress or egress to upland areas. In such circumstances, structural enhancements shall be required to maintain wetland connectivity and natural flow regimes.

Policy 5.3.4-5.3.5 Infrastructure Planning ~~Protection of Rural Roads~~

In order to protect rural character, the County shall limit the capacity of ~~all county~~ roads within the ~~EMPA~~ Emeraldal Marsh RPA to no more than two (2) travel lanes.

Policy 5.3.5 Development within the EMPA ~~5.3.2 Land Use in the Emeraldal Marsh RPA~~

Lake County shall ~~protect the EMPA by limiting~~ future land use ~~within the Emeraldal Marsh RPA~~ to the Rural Future Land Use ~~Category Low Density, Rural Medium Density, and Public Benefit Series~~ Future Land Use ~~Categories~~ Series. ~~Inside that portion of the Emeraldal Rural Protection Area located east of Lake Griffin and west CR452, any subdivision of land into three (3) or more lots, and resulting in an allowable density greater than one (1) dwelling unit per twenty (20) net acres calculated over the original parcel shall be configured as a clustered Rural Conservation Subdivision and dedicate at least 35% of the net buildable area of the original parcel as common open space. In addition, the County may require Rural Conservation Subdivision design, utilizing Planned Development zoning and with clustering, for any proposed development within the EMPA~~ Emeraldal Marsh RPA to ensure the protection of natural resources including, but not limited to habitat, wildlife, and wildlife corridors. Clustering and common open space shall be used to provide upland connectivity between wetlands, to protect ~~habitat and~~ corridors for wildlife movement, and to maximize buffers and open space adjacent to public conservation land. ~~At least 50% of the required open space on a development site shall be configured as a single contiguous tract.~~

Policy 5.3.6-5.3.3 Development Design Standards

New ~~residential~~ development ~~utilizing PUD zoning~~ within the ~~EMPA~~ Emeraldal Marsh RPA shall implement conservation ~~subdivision~~ design standards including:

- ~~1.~~ Clustering of ~~dwelling units on smaller lots~~ development within Rural Conservation Subdivisions, in order to create contiguous tracts of common open space for the protection of ~~wildlife and natural habitat,~~ natural resources,

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including but not limited to habitat, wildlife, and wildlife corridors; maximize buffers and open space adjacent to public conservation land, and provide opportunities for passive recreation;

- ~~2-~~Maintaining, enhancing, and protecting corridors for wildlife movement in coordination with adjacent property owners;
- Protection of common open space in perpetuity by easement, plat, or similar recorded and legally binding instrument;
- ~~4-~~Minimization of site disturbance and alteration of terrain, through use of design techniques that protect native vegetation and minimize earth movement such as reduced pavement widths, stem-wall construction, and swales, ~~and native landscaping, and~~
- Use of native landscaping and "right plant-right place" landscaping techniques to provide compatibility with the natural environment and minimize the use of chemicals, pesticides, and water for irrigation;
- Limiting irrigated lawn and landscaping to no more than 50% of all pervious areas, including within both residential lots and common areas.