



## Agenda Item Summary

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**File #:** 24-00670

**Agenda Date:** [Publish Date]

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**Agenda Item Name:**

**108 Acres Rural Subdivision – Approve Conservation Easement in favor of Alachua County**

**Presenter:**

Emily Rodriguez, Sr. Planner, Environmental Protection Department, 352-264-6836

**Description:**

The proposed 108 Acres rural subdivision is located on County Road 235, between Alachua and LaCrosse. The Development Review Committee (DRC) approved the preliminary design plan in August, 2023 as a 24-lot rural cluster subdivision and the project is currently under review for the Final Development Plan. The single-family lots are clustered in the southern portion of the property and are between 1 – 1.5 acres each. The 41-acre Conservation Management Area (CMA) has been designated within the northeastern portion of the property. To meet the applicable code requirements for regulated natural resource management and protection, the designated CMA will be protected in perpetuity with a recorded Conservation Easement conveyed to Alachua County.

**Recommended Action:**

Approve the Conservation Easement

**Prior Board Motions:**

N/A

**Fiscal Note:**

N/A

**Strategic Guide:**

Environment

**Background:**

The designated CMA consists of 35.41 acres of wetlands and the remaining acreage is the associated 75 ft. wetland buffer, which is required to be protected under Article VI, Chapter 406, Alachua County Unified Land Development Code. The wetlands are a combination of Mixed Hardwood and Bay Swamp, while the wetland buffer is predominantly fallow pasture. 100-year FEMA floodplain covers almost the entire onsite wetland area.

An Environmental Resource Assessment (ERA) was conducted in 2022 for the property by the environmental consulting firm, Verde Environmental. EDA Consultants Inc. staff prepared a

“Conservation Area Management Plan” (July, 2024) to address the perpetual management, authorized, and prohibited activities associated with the CMA. The perimeter of the CMA will include signage and segments of pedestrian paths to allow passive recreation, which is an allowable use within a CMA. Installation of the proposed paths will not result in any tree removal.

There is an infestation of coral ardisia (*Ardisia crenata*), an invasive non-native species, within portions of the wetland and wetland buffer. The management plan outlines invasive non-native plant control requirements to restore the CMA to its natural condition. The cost and responsibility of managing the CMA will be borne by the 108 Acres Rural Subdivision Homeowners Association. Annual monitoring reports will be provided to the Alachua County Environmental Protection Department (EPD) that document the habitat conditions and management activities conducted during the previous year and anticipated during the following year. EPD staff will conduct annual inspections of the designated CMA, typically coinciding with receipt of the monitoring reports.

The civil engineering plans include references to the installation of appropriate erosion control and barrier fencing during construction to ensure there are no unauthorized encroachments of equipment, material, or vehicles within the CMA.

Permanent protection of the designated CMA is reflected through the recording of a Conservation Easement (CE). The purpose of the CE is to preserve the habitat in its current form, enhance existing conservation resources, and prevent any further development or disturbances by requiring adherence to the management practices specified in the CMA Management Plan. The owner/applicant (Grantor) has proposed the designated CE recipient (Grantee) of the CE will be Alachua County.

The County has a standard procedure that permanent easements to be granted to the County are placed on Consent Agenda for approval by the BoCC and are Approved as to Form by the County Attorney and signed by the Chair. Staff is therefore bringing this item forth to fulfill this standard procedure.