

## How can I maintain and protect a wetland area near my home?

The best way to protect a natural area on your property is to:

- Stay out of the natural area
- Do not add dirt or fill in the natural area
- Do not build unpermitted structures like fences or sheds in the natural area
- Do not create brush/landscape waste or refuse piles in the natural area
- Do not mow in the natural area
- Do not plant non-native vegetation in or around the natural area



Fence in a wetland



Fill in a riparian or buffer area

## Indicators of Wetlands:

- Dark, muddy soils and some sandy soils
- Standing water after rain
- Exposed roots on trees
- Swollen tree bases
- Water lines and lichen lines
- Presence of plants like ferns or sedges
- Presence of trees like cypress, bay, or elm
- Designated Floodplains

**You may still have wetlands even though you do not have any of the conditions listed above.**

## Land Development Code

Article 5: Resource Protection Standards

[mylakealfred.com/ULDC](http://mylakealfred.com/ULDC)

**For more information, please contact:**

**City of Lake Alfred**

**Community Development Department**

**120 E. Pomelo St.**

**Lake Alfred, FL 33850**

**Amée Bailey (863) 291-5748**

**Website: <http://mylakealfred.com>**



## *A Homeowners Guide to Wetlands Information*

### *Frequently Asked Questions*

#### **What is a wetland?**

Wetlands are areas that are wet for extended periods of time and support vegetation typically found in wet conditions. Florida wetlands include swamps, marshes, bay heads, bogs, cypress domes and strands, sloughs, wet prairies, Riverine swamps and marshes, hydric seepage slopes, tidal marshes, mangrove swamps and other



#### **What is a riparian or buffer area?**

A riparian or buffer area is the vegetated area adjacent to lakes, rivers, or wetlands. These areas help protect and support the functions of the wetland or water system. They also allow the wetland or water systems to expand during flood events. Having this expansion area can prevent water from entering developed areas.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Why are wetlands, riparian, and buffer areas important?

These areas provide many benefits to the surrounding ecosystem. They:

- Transfer nutrients into the soil for use by plants and animals.
- Clean runoff from roadways by filtering out pollutants, such as fertilizer, pesticides, or other contaminants and remove sediments before they can reach the water supply.
- Contribute to the groundwater supply by slowing water until it has time to return to the aquifer.
- Make up approximately 5% of land in the continental U.S., but contain almost 1/3 of our plant species.
- Provide aesthetic, research, and scientific value.
- Serve as a habitat for many plant and animal species that depend on moist, nutrient rich environments for survival.
- Control flooding by absorbing runoff from storms

### What are wetland impacts?

Wetland impacts are the effects of activity that pose a serious threat to the wetland and can result in the degradation of their function. Wetland impacts include:

- *Direct impacts*—result from disturbances that occur within the wetland. Common direct impacts to wetlands include filling, grading, removal of vegetation, building construction, changes in water levels and drainage patterns.



- *Indirect impacts*—result from disturbances that occur in areas outside of the wetland, such as uplands, other wetlands or waterways that have the ability to affect the wetland.



### Who regulates wetlands?

Wetland are regulated by many agencies including:

- **Federal**—Army Corp of Engineers 
- **State**—Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP)  and the Water Management Districts (WMD)  Southwest Florida Water Management District 
- **Local**—Polk County  and the City of Lake Alfred 

**Polk County can help you determine which agency has jurisdiction and what processes should be followed.**

### What are Wetland Requirements?

- Avoid and buffer — all wetlands include a *25 foot minimum / 40 foot average* undisturbed buffer.
- 50 foot buffer between the wetland and structures in the Green Swamp ACSC
- Mitigate any impacts—Before development a letter must obtained from a state agency (listed above) indicating that the site is either not within a wetland or that any impacts have been addressed through their permit process.

### How do you determine if wetlands are on your property?

To see if your property **may** contain wetlands the County's property viewer is available online which includes Wetland Protection Areas data.

<http://gisserver.polk-county.net/countyviewer/>

However, the only reliable way to determine a wetlands exists is to have the property reviewed by an environmental consultant.

**One acre of wetlands has the potential to store 1 ½ million gallons of floodwater!**