

#000882

Submission
9/24/01

My name is Bonnie O'Brien. I am here representing Glen Springs Preservation Association, Inc.

I would like to thank the staff for being patient and available for us to discuss various aspects of the comp plan. They were always very helpful and knowledgeable.

We have all spent many hours discussing the wetlands issue. We feel that the Suwannee-St. Johns Sierra Club policy on wetlands reflects the best interests of our community. It conforms to the county policy requiring the developer of property containing wetlands to meet standards to preserve and protect the wetlands but allowing for on site mitigation only if certain strict circumstance apply. City commissioners will make the final approval.

In keeping with the latest scientific findings, the Sierra Club policy does not allow for the creation of new wetlands as a substitute for wetlands that have been destroyed on site. This is very important because in July 2001, this statement was issued by the National Research Council on Wetlands...quote "the current approach, designed to ensure "no net loss" of wetlands, is a failure and that human made ecosystems are often poor substitutes for the real thing. What's more, these swamps(wetlands) or marshes, once regarded as unhealthy and worthless, were actually key wildlife habitat and valuable resources for cleaning water and controlling floods" end quote

It is time for us to listen to National experts who rely on recent data compiled from around the country and who are able to draw scientific conclusions based on this data. In 1999, when Gainesville's Water Management Advisory Board looked at this issue and wrote the wetlands policy for the Gainesvilles Comp Plan, they were working with old data based on a 1980's mitigation policy.

Around the country communities will begin to look at this new 2001 data and base future wetlands policy on new fact. Gainesville has already been put on alert. The St. John's Water Management District has declared our area a "water resource caution area". We need to heed this warning and preserve and protect our city's natural wetlands. The staff's proposed plan allows destroying natural wetland ecosystems and trying to create wetlands some place else. Attempts at creating new wetlands as a substitute for natural wetlands is not an option under the Sierra Club Policy.

Bonnie O'Brien
September 24, 2001