

In all, as the landscape is reorganized to better "fit" the needs and desires of humanity, the overall effects on the wider environment are not considered. Humanity now controls the destiny of the landscape through the release and control of energies that shape, move, and dig the earth, and energies that build and maintain clusters of buildings and their inhabitants. The high energy concentrated by-products of the urbanized landscape released to the environment develop new ecological systems at outfall points and reorganize other existing systems through which they pass. Without an overall landscape perspective, one that integrates into "wholes" rather than dissects into pieces, the task of managing the environment is rendered almost hopeless. Resource management strategies must include the wider setting within which the resource is embedded. Management must start with the watershed, and the use, reuse, and reorganization of the landscape at that level must be dealt with first, before any realistic management strategy can be outlined for the parts.

Protecting Wetland Values

Wetlands, and the vital functions they perform, are worthy of special mention in any management strategy. Unconstrained development in the past has led to the loss of untold acreage of wetlands, but more importantly, it has led to the loss of vital services and wildlife habitat.

The consequences of insensitive and unconstrained development on Florida's wetlands are well documented. Since the turn of the century, approximately 40% of the wetlands within the state have been drained, converted to agricultural uses, or developed as urban lands. Little understood in the public forum however, are the secondary impacts on the public health and well being.

When wetlands are eliminated from the landscape, or when wetland functions are severely impaired through insensitive development techniques, much more is lost than just a "few worthless swamps". Wildlife habitat is lost that directly affects species that depend on those areas for survival. The near extinction and endangerment of wildlife species is due for the most part from loss of habitat, rather than over-hunting or poaching.

The loss of wetland functions, like water storage and water quality enhancement, directly affect the health, safety and well-being of humanity. As storage is lost and urbanization increases, downstream flooding results, requiring ever increasing expenditures of money and energy to mitigate. Valuable water is shunted to the estuaries, increasing nutrient loads and contaminants. Without the filtering that wetlands perform, ground waters and runoff waters become increasingly contaminated with an array of nutrients, metals, and toxins, threatening public water supplies, and the quality of receiving water bodies.

Present state and federal laws affect only a portion of Florida's wetlands and leave to ultimate destruction the majority of Florida's most valuable natural assets. The role of comprehensive planning in protecting Florida's wetlands is very important, for only through the stated objectives and goals of community comprehensive plans can the value of wetlands to the community at large and their value in enhancing the public's health and