



# INITIATION SUMMARY COUNTY INITIATED AMENDMENT

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FINAL REPORT, MAY 1, 2024

## I. General Data

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**Project Name:** Environmentally Sensitive Lands Initiation  
**Project Manager:** Stephanie Gregory, Principal Planner, Planning Division  
Mark Meyer, Senior Planner, Environmental Resources Management  
**Staff Recommendation:** Staff recommends *to initiate* the Comprehensive Plan amendments

## II. Item Summary

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**Summary:** The item before the Board is to consider the initiation of County proposed text amendments to the Comprehensive Plan regarding Environmentally Sensitive Lands (ESL). The Department of Environmental Resources Management (ERM) is proposing revisions to the existing definition of ESLs within the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC). ERM is requesting that the modified definition also be added to the Introduction and Administration (I&A) Element of the Comprehensive Plan. This will result in a review of all Comprehensive Plan Elements to ensure that the existing use of the term is consistent with the new definition. Pending staff analysis and coordination with ERM and Zoning, several other elements in the Plan may need to be amended.

**Staff Assessment:** The initiation process allows the Board to consider the proposed changes to the Comprehensive Plan. The complete staff report for the amendment would return to the Board for discussion at subsequent hearings. Initiation does not obligate the Board to future action.

**ULDC Impacts:** The proposed text amendments will require changes to the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC).

### III. Meeting History

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**Local Planning Agency/Planning Commission (LPA/PLC): *Initiate***, motion by Penny Pompei, seconded by Varissa Lall Dass, passed in an 8 to 0 vote at the April 12, 2024 meeting. There was minimal discussion. One member of the public representing the Sierra Club-Loxahatchee Group spoke requesting additional information on the change in definition to provide an opinion of support or denial.

**Board of County Commissioners (BCC):**

- ***Initiate Comp Plan text amendments***, motion by Vice Mayor Marino, seconded by Commissioner Weiss, passed in a 7 to 0 vote at the May 1, 2024 meeting. Commission discussion included the request for additional information on the proposed definition and clarification of the text initiation process. Two members of the public spoke regarding the importance of protecting environmentally sensitive lands and clarification of the proposed changes.
- ***Initiate ULDC revisions***, motion by Vice Mayor Marino, seconded by Commissioner Woodward, passed in a 7 to 0 vote at the May 1, 2024 public hearing.

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## **IV. Background**

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The purpose of a formal initiation of the amendments in each round is:

- To ensure advanced consideration of the proposed amendments; and
- To provide an opportunity for the Board to identify specific information or analysis to be considered during the amendment review process.

## **V. Proposed Amendments for Initiation**

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The Department of Environmental Resources Management (ERM) is coordinating with Planning and Zoning to update the current definition of Environmentally Sensitive Lands (ESL) as they have determined that it is outdated and no longer reflects the existing ESL owned or managed by the County. The definition is proposed for revision in order to best protect the County's natural areas.

ERM is also requesting that the modified definition be added to the Introduction and Administration (I&A) Element of the Comprehensive Plan. This will result in a review of all Comprehensive Plan Elements to ensure that the existing use of the term is consistent with the new definition. Pending staff analysis and coordination with ERM and Zoning, several other elements in the Plan may need to be amended concurrently.

If the amendments are initiated, staff will research and review each item and return to the Board with full data and analysis for further consideration.

## **VI. ULDC Implications**

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The proposed amendments will require subsequent changes to the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC).

## **VII. Assessment**

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The Introduction and Administration Element of the Comprehensive Plan requires that County initiated Comprehensive Plan amendments be presented to the Board of County Commissioners or the Planning Commission. The initiation of the proposed items does not imply that these amendments will be approved. Rather, the initiation authorizes staff to proceed with the review and analysis of the proposed amendments. Subsequent to initiation, staff will prepare a staff report with data and analysis for each amendment. The Planning Division and associated Departments will present each staff report to the PLC and BCC at subsequent public hearings.