

## **SPECIAL TOPICS**

### **3.4 AN ASSESSMENT OF WHETHER THE CRITERIA ADOPTED PURSUANT TO S. 163.3177(6)(A) WAS SUCCESSFUL IN ACHIEVING COMPATIBILITY WITH MILITARY INSTALLATIONS [163.3191(2)(n)]**

Within unincorporated Volusia County there is one active bombing range known as the Lake George Range. The range consists of 9,358 acres of open water situated within Lake George. There are numerous targets located within the shallow waters of the lake. Remote-controlled boats can be used as well to create a moving target environment. Observation towers are located on Nine Mile Point and Pine Island along the eastern shore of Lake George. Only inert (non-explosive) ordnance is used on the range.

The Lake George Range was established in World War II to train Navy pilots; the range was part of the significant military presence in Volusia County (and much of Florida) during the war years. Airplanes such as Douglass Dauntless and Grumman Avenger bombers were originally used for training over Lake George. Currently, the Navy uses state-of-the-art aircraft over the range that includes the P-3 Orion, the F/A-18 fighter/interceptor and various helicopters.

Missions flown to the range originate from various locations such as the Jacksonville Naval Air Station, aircraft carriers and other bases. While at the Lake George Range, pilots practice bomb drops and rocket firings, as well as the flight maneuvers needed to effectively deliver ordnance and evade enemy fire. There is a significant amount of airtime spent over the airspace of the lake and adjacent upland areas. The Navy refers to the airspace associated with the Lake George Range as the Palatka 1 Military Operation Area (MOA). The Palatka 1 MOA also encompasses the Pinecastle Bombing Range in Marion County. In addition, there is a Palatka 2 MOA that is contiguous to the Palatka 1 MOA. The Palatka 2 MOA is associated with a third Navy range known as the Rodman Target, located in Putnam County. None of the Palatka 2 MOA is located within Volusia County, but in general, both the Palatka 1 and Palatka 2 MOAs are activated at the same time when the three ranges are scheduled for use.

The Pinecastle Bombing range is located in the Ocala National Forest west of Volusia County. The Pinecastle Range like the Lake George Range was first established during World War II. The Pinecastle Range is an upland site that is used for target practice on vehicle hulks and other targets. A major difference between the Pinecastle and Lake George Ranges, besides one site is upland and the other is open water, is that live ordnance is used at Pinecastle. In fact the Pinecastle range is the only site along the east coast of the United States available to the Navy for live ordnance training; and the importance of the Pinecastle site has been enhanced with the closure of the Vieques Range in Puerto Rico. While the Pinecastle range is located out of the County the MOA for Pinecastle includes a portion of northwest Volusia.

Airtime associated with both ranges within the Military Operation Areas for either range can be associated with significant noise levels as aircraft dive, bank, climb and accelerate. In addition, the use of live ordnance on Pinecastle in Marion County can sometimes be heard, and felt (vibrations), within northwest Volusia. Activities at both the ranges can create land use conflicts associated with aircraft noise and munition detonation. However, according to the Public Affairs Office at the Jacksonville Naval Air

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Station, the Navy recorded only one complaint associated with Pinecastle and Lake George ranges in the last year. The Public Affairs Office stated that based on Navy public scoping and public surveying efforts, most people in the area have lived in the area for a long time and appear to be used to the Navy training activities. While the disposition of the existing residents in Northwest Volusia and other areas out of the County near the ranges have appeared to help keep complaints to a minimum, the fact that historically and currently there is a low population density in the area has also had a positive impact on limiting complaints. Land uses within the Palatka 1 MOA located within Volusia County are mostly low intensity types that feature agriculture and dwellings on acreage lots. In addition, there is a significant amount of public land in the MOAs that front on both the St. Johns River and Lake George. In the early 1990's the County and the St. Johns River Water Management District bought 11,461 acres that includes over 7 miles of Lake George shoreline. Public land purchases in the area continued into the late 1990's. The State of Florida bought about 19,000 acres of land in the northwest Volusia area that includes over three miles of frontage along the St. Johns River. The State lands are currently managed by the State Division of Forestry and abut the northern limits of a longstanding federal holding known as the Lake Woodruff Wildlife Refuge. The above-referenced public lands were bought for natural resource preservation purposes, and the land is used for timber production, ecological restoration, and passive recreation (hiking, fishing, hunting, etc.). These public land holdings will not be developed with residential dwellings, even at low rural densities, and serve to direct growth and development away from the Palatka 1 MOA. The uses now occurring on the public property do not conflict with the range MOA. The only activity occurring on the public land that could have an impact on Navy operations is controlled burning. However, controlled burning activities are always coordinated with the Navy (Jacksonville Naval Air Station).

The northwest Volusia area has been developed at a rural scale for many years. Agriculture, conservation/government land and dwellings on large lots are the predominate land uses in the northwest Volusia area. However, there are nodes of development that feature urban scale densities. Clusters of activity, mostly residential and/or tourist uses, along the St. Johns River and Lake George, characterize these nodal areas. Dwelling types within these areas range from mobile homes on individually owned small lots, standard single-family homes on small lots, multiple dwellings on single parcels (RV or trailer park), and multi-family units. Non-residential uses may include bait shops, boat ramps, marina facilities and restaurants. These nodes of development are commonly referred to as fish camps.

The unincorporated community of Volusia is located within the Palatka 1 MOA. Volusia is located along the St Johns River near the SR 40 crossing of the St. Johns River. Volusia land uses include residential on lots ranging from the 5,000 square foot size to over 10 acres. Smaller lots are mostly located along the river, or situated along a series of canals that connect to the river. Marina facilities complete with boat storage and ancillary uses (restaurant, boat repair, etc.) are located in the community. There is a small hotel and an RV park located along and near highway 40.

The County has recognized the rural character of the northwest Volusia area by assigning most privately owned land with low intensity land uses such as Environmental Systems Corridor (ESC), Forestry Resource (FR) and Agricultural Resource (AR). The ESC has a density allotment of one unit per 25 acres; the minimum lot size in the FR is

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20 acres, and the AR category requires a 10-acre lot. The County's Comprehensive Plan addresses the fish camp areas and the community of Volusia in a more unique manner. The County recognizes that the development density associated with these fish camp areas and the community of Volusia is anomalous and most of the development within these areas predates current planning and land use regulations. The County has recognized uses associated with the fish camps by a special designation illustrated within the Comprehensive Plan as Rural Recreational areas. The existing zoning within the Rural Recreation areas has been maintained. However, any change of zoning must be consistent with the underlying land use designation. In many cases zoning cannot be changed to facilitate an increase of density or land use intensity due to the fact that the underlying land use is a low intensity, non-urban type of category. The community of Volusia is designated as a Rural Community and the Volusia Rural Community is 750 acres in size. A Rural Community is similar to the above-mentioned Rural Recreational area in the fact that the existing zoning for a Rural Community is maintained. A change of zoning will also require consistency with the underlying land use category. In the case of the community of Volusia, the underlying land use category is Rural. The Rural designation allows agricultural uses along with estate-oriented residential development. The preferred density in the Rural category is one unit per 5 acres, and there are provisions to allow lot sizes down to an acre.

The land use pattern within northwest Volusia has been stable for a number of years. While there has been growth in the area, much of that growth has occurred as residential dwellings on acreage-oriented parcels. The trend of acreage lots will continue as agricultural uses become less feasible. For example, trends in the agricultural community suggest that fern production within northwest Volusia may be waning. Foreign competition and recent hurricanes have created an uncertain economic climate for the fern industry. A reduction of fern production, without an alternative crop, will probably result in former fern property being subdivided into large-lot subdivisions. Another real estate trend within the northwest Volusia area that has recently emerged is proposals to convert existing marinas and fish camps to residential developments that feature varying densities including multi-family and single-family developments. These development proposals have been for waterfront properties. As waterfront real estate becomes more valuable, investors have begun to look at property in rural areas that have a waterfront amenity. In addition, there is limited central water and sewer service available in the community of Volusia. The existence of central water and sewer provided by the Astor/Astor Park Utility Cooperative has further facilitated proposals for more density especially multi-family development formats.

A certain level of growth in northwest Volusia is somewhat inevitable. However, a good portion of the future growth within the northwest area will be low density and rural in nature. Therefore, further rural development in the northwest Volusia at present density allowances consistent with the Comprehensive Plan probably represents an acceptable situation with regard to maintaining the Lake George and Pinecastle Ranges as viable training facilities. However, recent trends regarding waterfront real estate in Volusia County, and much of Florida, has resulted in market pressure to increase density along the St. Johns River, and will probably eventually impact communities along Lake George (Shell Harbor Estates and Pine Island). The pressure to increase density can lead to development patterns that have the potential to introduce more population within the Palatka 1 Military Operation Area. More population could result in greater scrutiny and more complaints concerning range activities.

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The County's Land Use Plan has sought to maintain the character in northwest Volusia by recognizing the existing development pattern, and the Plan does not encourage land use intensification. However, market trends, as evidenced by recent land use inquiries, portend a potential increase in density within the Volusia portion of the Palatka 1 Military Operation Area. As has been stated, an increase of density within the MOA would not be conducive to maintaining Navy flight training within the area. Therefore, in order to protect the MOA and the use of the ranges the County will add language to the Comprehensive Plan that discourages the increase of land use density within the mapped MOA (See Figure 3.4 – MOA Map). The County will not seek to roll back existing entitlements but will strive to maintain the land use density and intensity that currently exists. Policy addition(s) will occur during the EAR-based amendment cycle. In addition, the County has land development guidelines for towers and antennae. A provision should be added to the tower and antennae guideline section that discourages the development of such structures in a manner that could impact MOA activities. Finally, in order to facilitate military involvement in the land use/zoning process, the County will establish a policy that requires notification of the Navy, or its assignees, when a change of land use or zoning that results in an increase of density/intensity is proposed within the MOA.

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**Figure 3.4:** Military Operation Area (MOA)

