



C H A T H A M C O U N T Y - S A V A N N A H

METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

"Planning the Future - Respecting the Past"

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: April 22, 2025
TO: THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF SAVANNAH
FROM: METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION
SUBJECT: FLUM Amendment

PETITION REFERENCED:

Owner: JR Stokes Properties, LLC / Jeff Greiner

Agent: Harold Yellin

Address: 605 Old River Road, Sandhill Road

Alderman District: Unassigned (Annexation Pending)

County Commission District: 7 - Dean Kicklighter

Property Identification Number: 11046 01001A, 11046 01001B

Petition File Number: 25-001356-ZA

MPC ACTION:

As the request is consistent with adopted policy documents, the Planning Commission recommends **approval** of the requested FLUM amendment from 'Residential Suburban Single-family' to 'Planned Development' for the identified portions of the subject properties.

MPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

As the request is consistent with adopted policy documents, MPC Staff recommends **approval** of the requested FLUM amendment from 'Residential Suburban Single-family' to 'Planned Development' for the identified portions of the subject properties.

MEMBERS PRESENT: 11

Traci Amick
Laureen Boles
Travis Coles – Vice Chair
Karen Jarrett – Chairwoman
Michael Kaigler
Jay Melder
Jeff Notrica
Stephen Plunk
Coren Ross
Joseph Welch
Amanda Wilson

PLANNING COMMISSION VOTE: Approve Staff Recommendation. (7-4)

APPROVAL Votes: 7	DENIAL Votes: 4	ABSENT	Abstain	Recused
Boles Coles Kaigler Melder Notrica Plunk Welch	Amick Jarrett Wilson Ross	Woiwode Ervin Stephens		



Respectfully submitted,



Melanie Wilson
Executive Director and CEO

MW/sh

Enclosure

cc Mark Massey, Clerk of Council
Lester B. Johnson, Assistant City Attorney
Jennifer Herman, Assistant City Attorney
Bridget Lidy, Department of Inspections



CHATHAM COUNTY - SAVANNAH
METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

Planning the Future – Respecting the Past

Council Report

To: City Council

From: Planning Commission

Date: April 22, 2025

Subject: Comprehensive Plan - Future Land Use Map Amendment

Applicant/Agent: Harold Yellin, Hunter MacLean for Forino Co., LLP

Address: 605 Old River Road, Sandhill Road

PIN's: 11046 01001A, 11046 01001B

Site Area: 159.7 acres

Aldermanic District: Unassigned (Annexation Pending)

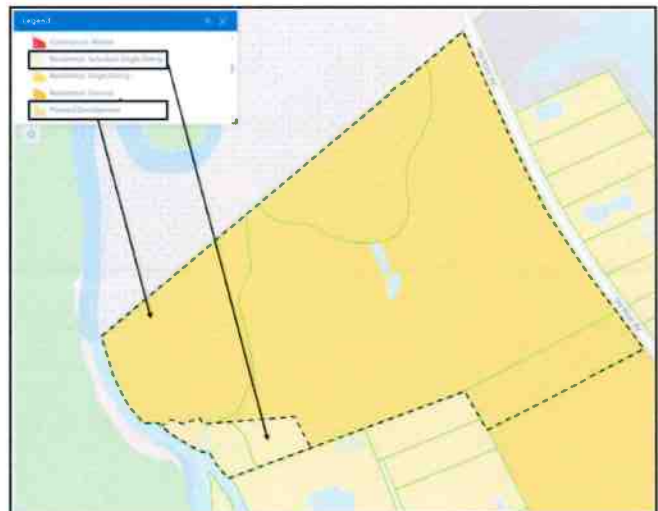
Chatham County Commission District: 7 – Dean Kicklighter

File Number: 25-001356-ZA-FLUM

Request: The Petitioner requests amendment of the Future Land Use Map from *Residential Suburban Single-Family* to *Planned Development* for portions of 2 parcels already designated predominately for Planned Development use. The request includes portions of land totaling approximately 7 acres out of 159 proposed for development.

This petition is filed concurrently with requests to annex and to rezone (25-001312-ZA) the subject properties from Residential Agriculture (R-A) under the Chatham County Zoning Ordinance to a Planned Development

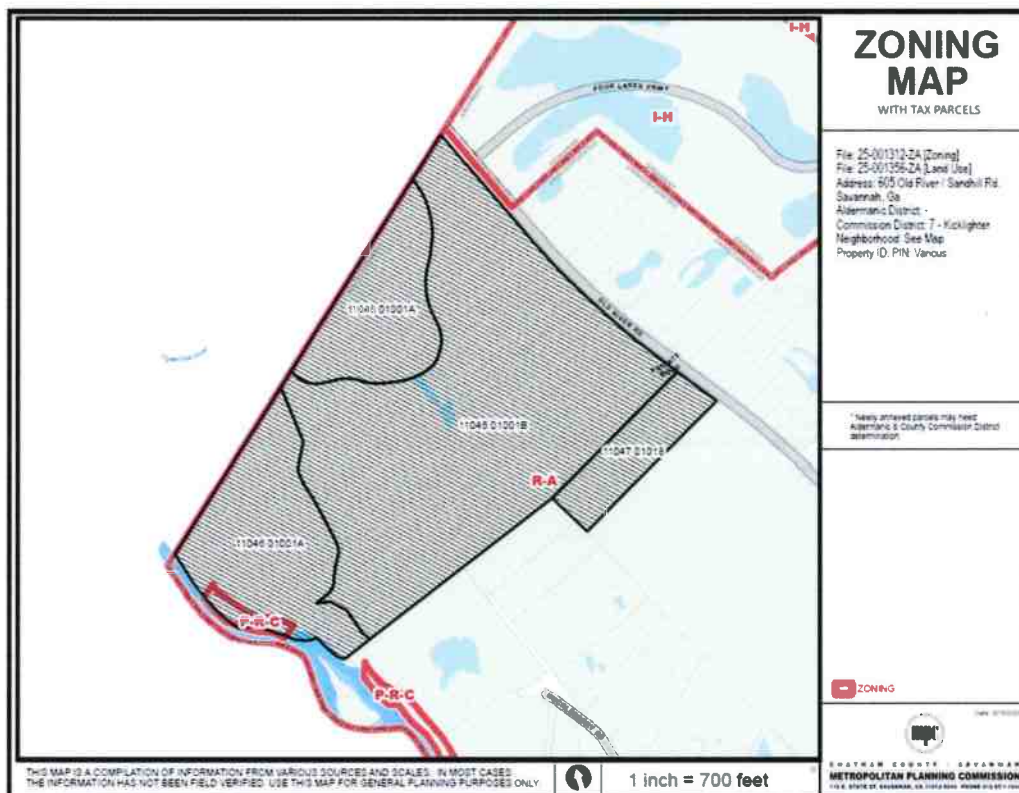
designation within the City of Savannah. Proposed is an approximately 159-acre mixed use residential and neighborhood-scale commercial development. Upon completion, the project would see the construction of up to 1,665 dwelling units with up to 50,000 square feet of commercial floor area.



Existing zoning: The existing zoning for the subject parcel is R-A (Residential Agriculture). The purpose of this district is to protect those rural areas within the urban expansion areas of the county for future urban development, and to protect certain rural highway roadside areas against strip development, which can lead to traffic congestion, traffic hazards, and roadside blight.

The purpose of the P-R-C district shall be to create areas within protected river corridors as defined by the River Corridor Protection Act, in order to help preserve those qualities that make a river suitable as a habitat for wildlife, a site for recreation, and a source for clean drinking water, to allow free movement of waters. Such districts shall be considered "overlay" districts and the uses permitted such districts shall be those uses permitted in the zoning district which it overlays, subject to the restrictions and prohibitions of [Sec. 4-10](#).

Location	Land Use	Existing Zoning
North	Chatham-Savannah Manufacturing Center; Effingham County; Vacant/Wetlands	I-H; Effingham County
South	Single-family Dwellings	R-A
East	Single-family Dwellings; Chatham-Savannah Manufacturing Center	I-H
West	Ogeechee River; Bryan County	Bryan County



Current zoning of the subject property and surroundings



Adjoining Jurisdictions



Effective Flood Zones (2018)



National Wetlands Inventory

(A description of the wetlands classifications on the subject parcels is appended to the bottom of this report.)

Existing FLUM: The existing FLUM designation for the subject parcel is '*Residential Suburban Single-Family*.' These are areas identified for single-family detached residential dwellings at a density not to exceed five (5) units per gross acre. This category includes non-residential uses that are compatible with the residential character and scale of the neighborhood.

Requested FLUM: The requested FLUM designation for the subject parcel is Planned Development.' These consist of master planned areas accommodating cluster development, neotraditional development, or mixed residential, commercial, or civic uses. Such developments are characterized by internal or external linkages among residential, commercial, institutional, or recreational use components. This category includes Amenity Communities, Village Centers, Town Centers, and existing PUDs.

Evaluation

Within the City of Savannah, the Zoning Ordinance requires amendments to the zoning map to be consistent with the FLUM. In essence, amendment of the FLUM very technically signals approval of only specifically identified zoning districts.

Given that the Ordinance specifies no particular criteria, consideration of the following points may serve to elucidate whether the proposed amendment meets the intent of existing, published guidance:

1. The relationship of the proposed amendment to the existing and future land uses depicted in the Future Land Use Map.

Savannah-Chatham County's Joint Comprehensive Plan, Plan 2040, identifies the subject parcel and surroundings as *Suburban Residential*. This character area anticipates apartments, small-scale commercial uses, and civic/institutional uses in an automobile-oriented configuration. The following City of Savannah zoning districts and their permissible, limited and special uses are proposed for inclusion the PD.

Housing Type	RMF-2
Single-family detached	✓
Single-family attached	✓
Two-family	✓
Townhouse	✓
Stacked Townhouse	✓
Three-Four Family	✓
Apartment	✓

Limited Business (B-L)

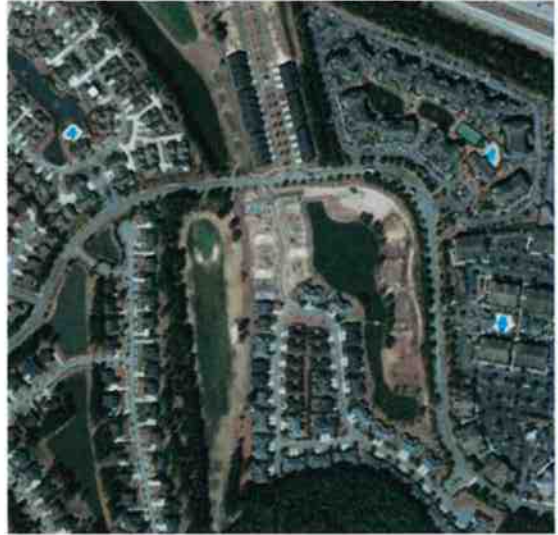
The B-L district is established to accommodate a variety of residential uses and a limited range of small-scale, neighborhood-oriented commercial and nonresidential uses together within the same district. This district is intended to be used in conjunction with nearby or adjacent Residential districts to create sustainable neighborhoods with convenient access to neighborhood-serving commercial uses.

Neighborhood Business (B-N)

The B-N district is established to permit small-scale, neighborhood-oriented nonresidential uses and upper story residences. This district is intended to provide for limited commercial opportunities in a walkable environment and to reduce or prevent impacts on adjacent or nearby residential uses. Uses in this district are intended to be located primarily on collector or arterial streets within convenient traveling distance from neighborhoods which they will serve.

SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL

Suburban Residential character areas include low and medium density developments; generally, this character area features either single-family structures on large lots or medium-lot residential subdivisions with relatively uniform housing types and densities. However, multi-family apartments and attached single-family residential subdivisions are also prevalent in this area. Local streets are laid out in curvilinear patterns, with occasional cul-de-sacs and limited sidewalks. Suburban Residential areas adjacent to Suburban Commercial character areas should, to the extent possible, be designed as cohesive, connected neighborhoods. Alternative types of housing options should be encouraged in suburban areas to accommodate multi-generational households, seniors, and others.



PRIMARY USES	Single-family (detached & attached) Residential
SECONDARY USES	Small scale commercial & apartment buildings, civic & institutional facilities, neighborhood parks
DENSITY	Low, 3-5 units per acre
TRANSPORTATION	Automobile-oriented, limited public transit
ROAD FUNCT. CLASS	Local roads, collectors, arterials
PARKING	Off-street parking, private driveways, garages
UTILITIES	Supported by existing municipal utilities, some individual/community utility systems
OPEN SPACE	Community & regional parks, neighborhood greenspaces, waterways, golf courses



Prescribed Suburban Residential Character Area

2. The relationship of the proposed amendment to any applicable goals, objectives, policies, criteria, and standards adopted in the Comprehensive Plan.

The subject parcels are designated within locally adopted policy documents for suburban-style residential development that includes cluster developments like that proposed. While it is in an AE Flood Zone, it was not classified as part of the *Environmentally Sensitive* character area, which appears to align more closely with the FEMA 'VE' Flood Zone designation.

Given this sensitive environmental context, adopted goals related to *Natural Resources* offers beneficial insight into how development should be approached on this type of site:

NR Goal 1: *Protect the public health, safety, and welfare of residents from flood hazards.*

NR Goal 6: *Increase communities' adaptive capacity and resiliency.*

NR Goal 8: *Proactively manage stormwater runoff.*

3. Other professional planning principles, standards, information and more detailed plans and studies considered relevant.

Planned development is always preferential over ad hoc development. This segment of Old River Road exhibits a pattern of exurban and rural development described as “flag lots” or “flagpole lots.” The name derives from the long slender driveways connected to a public ROW created to access distant plots of land that may be stacked several layers in depth.

This manner of subdivision is an inefficient mode of land consumption and often leads to issues related to ownership and maintenance of driveways, lack of access for emergency vehicles, and noncompliant/nuisance uses of property that are difficult to detect and manage. Most significantly, though, communities never receive the benefit of proper infrastructure design when they develop in this manner.



Additionally, the Ogeechee Riverkeeper's submission (p. 33-37) for the Coastal Regional Commission's DRI report ([#4405](#)) provides a wealth of insight and guidance about how to condition the development and protect existing and future residents of the area from the threat of flood inundation. While the Riverkeeper ultimately supports denial of the annexation and petitions for development of the property, they provide specific considerations that would serve to protect both the river and wetlands to preserve the valuable ecological services they provide to Chatham County and the region.

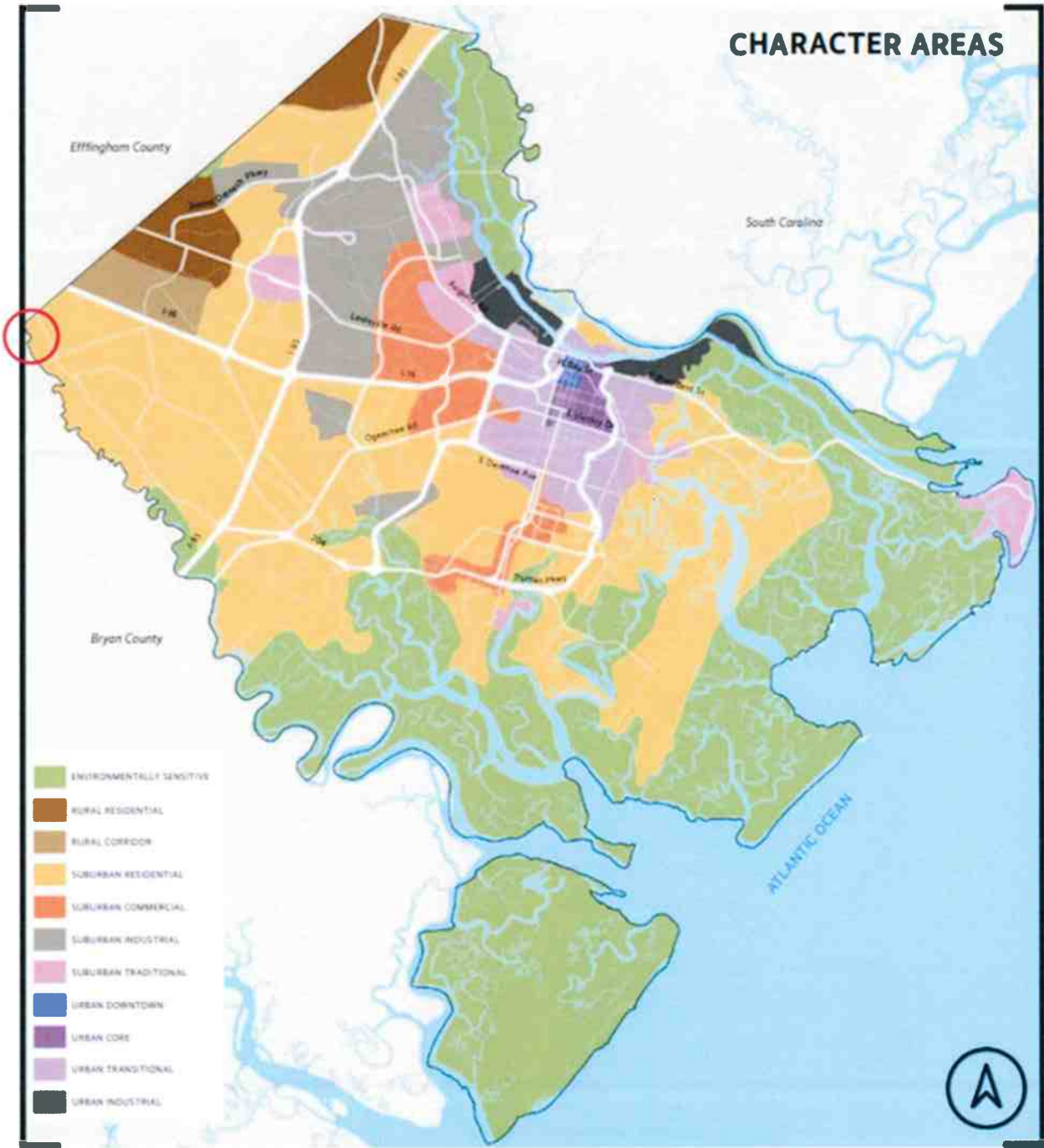
4. Written comments, evidence, and testimony of the public.

A neighborhood meeting was held at Southwest Baptist Church on the evening of February 5, 2025 to permit residents and leadership of the *West Chatham County Community Watch* to ask questions and express concerns to the developer of the proposal. In addition, MPC Staff has received email inquiries regarding the proposal, its anticipated impacts, and the preparedness of local infrastructure to accommodate the planned growth.

Staff did not directly receive any express support or opposition to this proposal, but has received public comment desiring to further understand how any negative potential impacts will be mitigated. Chief among these were concerns for increased flooding, which is believed to have been exacerbated largely by recent development in Western Chatham County. Second was that of increased traffic, particularly given the current state of Old River Road and Fort Argyle Road, which are not presently improved to handle the high volumes of traffic expected.

Recommendation

As the request is consistent with adopted policy documents, the Planning Commission recommends **approval** of the requested FLUM amendment from 'Residential Suburban Single-family' to 'Planned Development' for the identified portions of the subject properties.



Map 4.7- Potential Character Areas, Chatham County

What are the different Flood Zones and Risks?

In Savannah there are six zones: A, AE, AH, VE, X, and X_500.

Most of the City is in the X and X_500. The X zone, "Low Risk", is considered above the 100 and 500 year floodplains. The lightly shaded X or X_500, "Moderate Risk", is above or protected from the 100 year floodplain, but may have up to a foot of water in a 500 year storm event.

The A, AH and AE Zones are the flood zones which are common in Savannah. These areas are in the "High Risk" area and are prone to flood with rising water in both the 100 year and the 500 year storms. Structures have a 1% annual chance of flooding and a 26% chance of flooding over the life of a 30-year mortgage. An unnumbered "A" zone means that no Base Flood Elevation (BFE) above Sea Level has yet been determined. "AE" means a base flood elevation has been determined. For example, "AE-15" means that the lowest finished floor elevation of the structure must be at or above 15 NAVD 1988 because that is where the predicted flood water will rise. Zone AH indicated shallow flooding, usually in the form of a pond, with an average depth ranging from 1 to 3 feet. All new construction must be constructed above the designed base flood elevation (DBFE). Also, in this zone the "50% rule" applies.

The VE Zones are the most dangerous flood zones. VE zones are in the "High Risk" area and will experience rising waters, severe winds and wave action greater than three feet. Homes in this area are on the south side of Savannah along the Forest and Vernon Rivers. To protect against wave scouring and frontal velocity, structures must be elevated so that the lowest horizontal structural member (floor joist) is above the designed base flood elevation (DBFE). Such construction usually means placing the structure on piles (pilings), and these pilings must also be anchored to resist flotation, collapse and lateral movement due to the combination effects of wind and water loading forces of the 100 year storm. A registered professional engineer or architect must develop, review and certify the structural design, specifications and plans. The 50% Rule also applies here too.

The Coastal A Zone: is a term that is used to draw a distinction between coastal V zones and inland A Zones, and to highlight similarities between V Zones and A Zones in coastal areas. A building in this area is subject to breaking wave heights between 2.9 feet and 1.5 feet. Building damage in Coastal A Zones is consistent with those observed in V Zones, not riverine A Zones. The City has not mapped the Coastal A zone at this time.

[FAQs • What are the different Flood Zones and Risks?](#)

Accessed via savannahga.gov

NWI - Wetland Classifications

Classification code: PFO2/1F

System Palustrine (P) : The Palustrine System includes all nontidal wetlands dominated by trees, shrubs, persistent emergents, emergent mosses or lichens, and all such wetlands that occur in tidal areas where salinity due to ocean-derived salts is below 0.5 ppt. It also includes wetlands lacking such vegetation, but with all of the following four characteristics: (1) area less than 8 ha (20 acres); (2) active wave-formed or bedrock shoreline features lacking; (3) water depth in the deepest part of basin less than 2.5 m (8.2 ft) at low water; and (4) salinity due to ocean-derived salts less than 0.5 ppt.

Class Forested (FO) : Characterized by woody vegetation that is 6 m tall or taller.

Subclass Needle-Leaved Deciduous (2) : This subclass, consisting of wetlands where trees or shrubs are predominantly deciduous and needle-leaved, is represented by young or stunted trees such as tamarack or bald cypress.

Split Subclass Broad-Leaved Deciduous (1) : Woody angiosperms (trees or shrubs) with relatively wide, flat leaves that are shed during the cold or dry season; e.g., black ash (*Fraxinus nigra*).

Water Regime Semipermanently Flooded (F) : Surface water persists throughout the growing season in most years. When surface water is absent, the water table is usually at or very near the land surface.

Classification code: PFO1C

System Palustrine (P) : The Palustrine System includes all nontidal wetlands dominated by trees, shrubs, persistent emergents, emergent mosses or lichens, and all such wetlands that occur in tidal areas where salinity due to ocean-derived salts is below 0.5 ppt. It also includes wetlands lacking such vegetation, but with all of the following four characteristics: (1) area less than 8 ha (20 acres); (2) active wave-formed or bedrock shoreline features lacking; (3) water depth in the deepest part of basin less than 2.5 m (8.2 ft) at low water; and (4) salinity due to ocean-derived salts less than 0.5 ppt.

Class Forested (FO) : Characterized by woody vegetation that is 6 m tall or taller.

Subclass Broad-Leaved Deciduous (1) : Woody angiosperms (trees or shrubs) with relatively wide, flat leaves that are shed during the cold or dry season; e.g., black ash (*Fraxinus nigra*).

Water Regime Seasonally Flooded (C) : Surface water is present for extended periods especially early in the growing season, but is absent by the end of the growing season in most years. The water table after flooding ceases is variable, extending from saturated to the surface to a water table well below the ground surface.