



COUNTY CONNECTION

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 4 • APRIL 2011

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TOP STORY

Farmland preservation MAINTAINING RURAL CHARACTER

By Chris Rison, Growth Management and Christy Jergens, Office of Public Information

Driving through Marion County, a typical driver sees not just homes, restaurants and businesses but also crops, groves, livestock and horses on farms that stretch on for acres. Farms such as these have dotted Marion County's landscape for generations and played a key role in shaping Marion County's character and history. County Commissioners and local groups have sought to protect this rural charm and part of Marion County's industry through creating a farmland preservation zone.

- Either be located within the designated Farmland Preservation Area or have attributes listed in [Policy 1.2* of the Conservation Element of the Marion County Comprehensive Plan](#). These attributes include locally significant natural resources, such as certain types of soil, water and vegetation. (*Policy 1.2 may be updated if approval is obtained through the Comprehensive Plan updates.)

If the property meets the above requirements, the conservation easement is recorded and the property owner is given TDR credits they can sell for use in different "receiving areas" in the county. Marion County is currently proposing to add more "receiving areas" where TDR credits may be used in the Comprehensive Plan EAR-based amendments discussed in "Inner workings of the county Comp Plan and EAR" on page two.

Transfer of Development Rights Program

Marion County's Transfer of Development Rights Program encourages preservation of rural lands throughout the county and establishes a focused Farmland Preservation Area in northwest Marion County. In the program, conservation easements are created, which are legal agreements to limit the amount of development on a property. The agreements are made between a landowner and a government agency or other entity to maintain the agricultural and/or natural use of the land and to protect the owner's agricultural and/or conservation interests. The Board of County Commissioners must approve the agreement, and the applicant will receive an official statement which will make the conservation easement permanent; its restrictions will remain if the land is sold or passed on to heirs.

Conservation easement participation criteria

Property must:

- Be a minimum of 30 acres.
- Have a "rural" land-use designation.



MISSION STATEMENT

Marion County provides professional and resourceful public services for our citizens through strategic planning and cost-effective implementation of county initiatives, generating positive results that set the standard for quality local government.

"Meeting Needs by Exceeding Expectations"

**TOP
 STORY**

April means a focus on farmland



County Commissioners have anointed April of each year Farmland Preservation Month. The idea? To preserve and promote Marion County farming and farmland. Find out more information about farming in Marion County by contacting UF/IFAS Marion County Extension Service at 352-671-8400 or visiting the department online at www.marioncountyfl.org/extension-service.htm

Farmland Preservation and TDRs

Purpose:

- Help protect the county's natural resources.
- Preserve prime farmlands.
- Protect rural farmland areas from incompatible land uses.
- Provide incentives and benefits to program participants.

Meeting the Goal:

- Goal: conserve 5,000 acres by Dec. 31, 2015.
- Status check: successfully protected 2,813.16 acres or 56% of the goal.

For more information about the Transfer of Development Rights program, contact Marion County Growth Management (Planning Division) at 352-438-2600.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Inner workings of the county "Comp Plan" and EAR

By Natalia Cox and Chris Rison, Growth Management

Marion County and how it will grow has been discussed backwards, forwards, sideways and up and down for the past few years as county officials and residents have worked together to determine how Marion County should look in 2035. The visioning document born out of the multitude of discussions is the county's Comprehensive Plan, or Comp Plan, which provides a desired goal to guide the county's growth decisions.



Staying on track

Marion County's Comprehensive Plan provides the framework and policy direction for land-use decisions; its Evaluation and Appraisal Report, or EAR, evaluates how the county is doing in terms of implementing the plan's long-term growth management objectives and policies.

Every seven to 10 years, the county prepares an EAR that evaluates its success in addressing major community issues and identifies recommendations for revisions and updates to the Comp Plan. The EAR acts as an opportunity to collect data and analyze public input and recommendations for change for the Comprehensive Plan, which is set to guide Marion County's growth for a 25-year horizon. The EAR provides an assessment of what we've accomplished, where we are currently and where we need to go.

The Florida Department of Community Affairs reviews comprehensive plans and amendments for consistency with various Florida statutes, policies and acts and issues reports on its findings.

Marion County completed its EAR and EAR-based amendments in February 2011, with extensive participation from citizens during the process. Input received from these meetings, as well as from the state and local agencies, resulted in five issue areas: urban sprawl, adequate public facilities, economic development, intergovernmental coordination and water resources.

The EAR process included:

- Using a 25-year Planning Horizon.
- Proposing a new Urban Growth Boundary, which allows the county and municipalities to geographically focus the provision of adequate public facilities, such as water, sewer, roads and life safety services within boundary lines.
- Incorporating new policies to reflect state requirements, such as greenhouse gases (as required by HB 697).
- Using current numbers to update population projections and a needs analysis methodology.

Marion County has submitted its adopted EAR-based amendments to the Department of Community Affairs, establishing the Marion County 2035 Comprehensive Plan. DCA officials have acknowledged receipt of the items and have indicated their expectation to publish a "notice of intent" within 45 days (on or around April 14, 2011) on their website and in the Star-Banner. The notice will indicate if the submitted amendments were found "in compliance" or "not in compliance."

For more information on the Marion County Comprehensive Plan update and the EAR process (or to view the plan and amendments) please visit http://www.marioncountyfl.org/Planning/EAR_about.aspx or contact Marion County Growth Management (Planning Division) at 352-438-2600.

NEWSFLASH



International trade opportunities now available for local businesses

By Christy Jergens, Office of Public Information, and Rick Michael, Office of Economic and Small Business Development

The County Commission has approved another initiative in a series of economic development opportunities. The Marion County International Gold Key Initiative is now underway through the leadership of the Ocala/Marion County Chamber of Commerce. The chamber volunteered to lead and implement the \$15,000 initiative during a January County Commission economic development workshop. This initiative will be leveraged and coordinated with the existing state and federal trade services (Enterprise Florida's International Trade Program and the U.S. Department of Commerce's international trade specialists) in more than 180 countries worldwide.

The Ocala/Marion County Chamber of Commerce will now be on the lookout for area businesses seeking assistance with entering or expanding their international sales presence and potential. The chamber will award "Gold Key" grant funds to Marion County businesses to acquire professional support from U.S. Commercial Services for obtaining pre-qualified sales meetings with potential buyers or sales representatives. Services include identifying potential buyers, translator and drive services, professional scheduling and market sales research.

To be eligible for a Marion County International Gold Key grant, the company must be located in Marion County and have a product suitable for export and sale overseas. For more information on the grant program or program eligibility, businesses can contact the Ocala/Marion County Chamber of Commerce at 352-629-8051. The program is open to all businesses; Chamber of Commerce membership is not required.

The Gold Key Initiative is one of 25 economic development

initiatives the Marion County Commission unveiled in December as part of the county's "Doing More for JOBS" report. Staff designed the report as an implementation plan for economic development stimulus projects that will support Marion employers and enhance the community's ability to stabilize and create new jobs.

"The chamber has a standing committee dedicated to working with the business community on international trade and, together with chamber staff, will be in a position to implement this initiative to area businesses immediately," said Commission Chairman Stan McClain.

In announcing the partnership, McClain discussed the chamber's increasing role in supporting international trade and the organization's participation in several trade missions in recent years. The Gold Key Initiative will focus on increased exportation in the county's agricultural and manufacturing sectors. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, Marion County's exports totaled \$177.7 million in 2008, an increase of 35 percent (an estimated \$47 million) since 2006. The county's exports are expected to reach \$200 million this year.

"Enhancing local exports will spread the sale and distribution of locally made products to new marketplaces," said Marion County Economic Development Coordinator Joe Saucer. "The result is an influx of fresh capital for circulation within the county's economy." Local economic leaders believe the increased exports will support retention of the existing employee work force while creating potential opportunities for new workers.

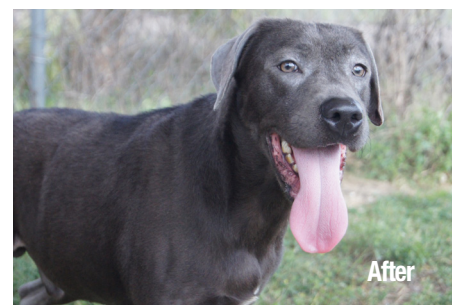
Three cases, 101 animals, 11 days

By Elaine Delorio, Office of Public Information



Between Feb. 15 and Feb. 25, Marion County Animal Services rescued 101 animals in three separate cruelty situations. Animal control officers rescued 35 cats living without fresh food, water, litter boxes or clean air exchange from a Silver Springs Shores-area home on Feb. 15. Seven days later officers rescued 29 cats living in crates from a Citra-area home. These cats lived in stacked cat carriers that were filled with waste.

Then, just three days after the Citra case, officers rescued a menagerie of 37 animals (goats, donkeys, dogs, cats and a bird) from an RV and van in a Dunnellon parking lot. All of the Dunnellon animals were severely emaciated; officers also found more than 10 deceased animals inside the vehicles. The Dunnellon Police Department arrested the animal owners and charged them with 37 felony counts of cruelty to animals. Currently, all of the animals are receiving care at the Animal Center.



SAVING WATER BEGINS AT HOME

Tips for starting a water conservation plan

By: Barbra Hernández, Office of Public Information, and Kim Dinkins, Office of the County Engineer

Since water is a limited resource, water conservation is an important part of living in Marion County. As the county's population – and thirst for water – continues to grow, we need to remember to conserve this precious resource for generations to come.

Marion County encourages citizens to celebrate Water Conservation Month in April by taking steps to help reduce water consumption. Begin conserving your water today by checking off tips from the following list:

SAVING WATER INDOORS

❑ **Check for leaks.**

Water losses caused by dripping appliances can range from several to hundreds of gallons of water per day. Check your sink, bathtub and toilet to detect easy-to-fix leaks.

❑ **Go with the flow, low-flow.**

Low-flow fixtures are inexpensive, easy-to-install attachments that will increase the water efficiency of home appliances. Look for faucet aerators and low-flow showerheads next time you stop by your favorite hardware store. Marion County Utilities offers these products to their customers free of charge. Call them to request a low-flow kit at 352-671-8510.

❑ **Think of the little things.**

Time your shower to five minutes or less. Thaw frozen food in the refrigerator, not under running water. Operate the washer with full loads only. These and other small actions can significantly conserve water when practiced regularly.

❑ **Keep your irrigation system in check.**

If you own an irrigation system, install a rain sensor or soil moisture sensor, which overrides the system when enough rain has fallen or the soil is moist enough to skip an irrigation cycle. Also, check your system regularly to detect any leaks or faulty sprinkler heads.

❑ **Again, it's the little things...**

Use an adjustable shutoff nozzle on your hose. Cover your spa or pool to reduce evaporation. Small outdoor actions build up to greater savings over time.

Source: Southwest Florida Water Management District and Marion County Utilities

SAVING WATER OUTDOORS

❑ **Know and follow your local watering restrictions (see below watering schedule).**

Overwatering of landscapes uses up the water supply, makes plants more prone to disease and pests and contributes to water pollution.

Calendar of Events

Find out what events are coming up in Marion County. Check the [online calendar of events](#).



Mandatory lawn watering restrictions specify the days when you may water. These days depend on whether you have an address that ends in an odd or even number, and on the time of year. So unless your day and number are up, please make sure those sprinklers stay down.

know your days

Time of year	Homes with addresses that end in an odd number (or have no address)	Homes with addresses that end in an even number	Non-residential properties
Daylight Saving Time	Wednesday/Saturday	Thursday/Sunday	Tuesday/Friday
Eastern Standard Time	Saturday	Sunday	Tuesday

- Daylight Saving Time is the second Sunday in March until the first Sunday in November.
- Eastern Standard Time is the first Sunday in November until the second Sunday in March.

Additional restrictions include:

- Water only when needed and not between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Water for no more than one hour per zone.
- Restrictions apply to private wells and pumps, ground or surface water and water from public and private utilities.
- Some exceptions apply.

Learn more at floridaswater.com.

Information provided by the St. Johns River Water Management District.

Contact Marion County
Water Resources at
352-671-8686
for more information.

www.marioncountyfl.org





EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

NORMA SAMUEL ■ EXTENSION AGENT II (UF/IFAS MARION COUNTY EXTENSION SERVICE)

Compiled By Christy Jergens, Office of Public Information

What is your educational background? Diploma General Agriculture – Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry – Trinidad; BS: Plant Protection and Pest Management – University of Georgia; MS: Plant Protection and Pest Management – University of Georgia.

Are you from Marion County originally? If you've lived other places, where have you lived? I am from the small Caribbean island nation of Antigua and Barbuda. I've lived in Trinidad, Georgia, South Carolina and Florida.

What made you interested in working in your field? My parents were farmers and each of us eight kids had our own little plot at home to take care of whatever we decided to grow. I took agriculture science in school and it was one of my favorite subjects, so I decided to pursue a career in that field.

What's your favorite or most rewarding part of your job? I think working with my 132 Master Gardener volunteers. They have a tremendous amount of energy, so they keep me on my feet. I have to find creative ways for them to spread the message to the residents of Marion

County of how to implement Florida-Friendly landscaping practices that protect and promote a healthy environment.

What work accomplishment have you been proudest of? I worked with two co-workers, Nancy Gal and Natasha Masciarelli, to write and publish a 4-H project book called "4-H Munchy Adventures." The book teaches youth ages 8-10 about healthy nutrition and physical activity choices. We received several state and regional awards for this book and made presentations related to activities in the book at several district, state and national professional association meetings. The curriculum is being used in Florida, Indiana, and Puerto Rico.

Tell us a little about your home life. I am married to Lesroy Samuel. We have three kids: Kadeem – 13, Kianna – 10 and Kailey – 7. My husband does not like to grow anything he cannot eat, so we have a huge vegetable garden that can feed all of the people on our street.

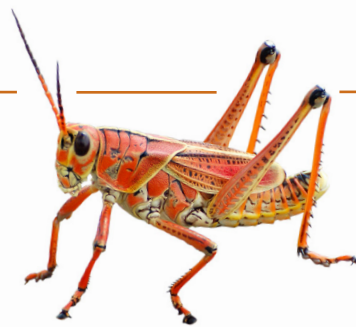
Garden Sense

Warm weather brings unfriendly insects

By Jo Leyte-Vidal (Master Gardener)

Bugs: Warm weather insects are beginning to surface now that temperatures are hotter. Be on guard for aphids – these piercing, sucking insects work on the underside of a leaf, feeding on tender new leaves and stems. Also look out for black and yellow striped lubber grasshoppers.

A safe and effective aphid control is to spray under the leaves with a mixture of insecticidal soap and a horticultural oil. The soap washes away the protective coating on the surface of the insect and disrupts its membrane functions, while the oil smothers the bug. The insect must come in direct contact with the spray in order for it to be effective. Product labels will state the amounts to be mixed. Only spray plants that show



infestation. Contact Extension Service for advice on how to remove lubber grasshoppers or other unwanted insects from your plants.

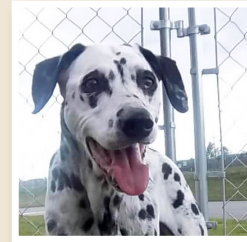
Flowers: Welcome lilies to your garden this month, including Amazon, Aztec, canna, blood and spider varieties. Also available are walking iris, celosia, impatiens, marigolds, amaranth, balsam, lobelia and strawflowers.

With annuals, remember to regularly deadhead and pinch them back so they remain bushy and full of blooms. For spring-blooming shrubs, azalea and camellia, prune them as soon as the last flowers fade and then shape them again before July 1.

For more garden tips, contact the UF/IFAS Marion County Extension Service at 352-671-8400.

PETS OF THE MONTH

By Elaine Delorio, Office of Public Information



Della



Zoey

Dalmatians were once known for being a firefighter's best friend, running alongside the fire wagon during emergencies, loyally watching over the firehouse and relaxing with their firefighter buddies after a long day's work. Della, a 6-year-old Dalmatian, is still looking for her best friend and doesn't care if you're a firefighter or a barista. She'll love you forever if you give her a chance.

Zoey isn't as large as she looks. She has quite the fluffy coat that can make her look like a mad scientist or an angel, depending on her mood. She was brought to the Animal Center because of her owner's allergies. But this 3-year-old kitty is litter-box trained and gets along with children, making her an ideal pet. So, if you don't have a feline-sensitive nose, come adopt your very own fluffy kitty named Zoey!

The adoption fee for Della (A038593) or Zoey (A039250) is only \$40 and includes the spay/neuter surgery, county license, current vaccinations and microchip. Call Marion County Animal Services at 352-671-8700 for more information or visit the department Tuesday – Friday from 10 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. or Saturday from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.