

Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
South Florida Field Office
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach, FL 32960
Phone: (772) 562-3909
Fax: (772) 778-5498
<http://www.fws.gov/verobeach/>

News Release



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Contact: Ken Warren, (772) 562-3909, x323

Updated USFWS/Charlotte County Scrub Jay Review Area

CHARLOTTE COUNTY, Fla. -- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Charlotte County partnered on a Memo of Understanding (MOU) in 2007. The MOU helps county residents and property owners identify potential impacts to the Florida scrub jay, a threatened species protected by the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The MOU includes an annual review by the USFWS and the county: "The Service and county will meet at least once per year to update the review area. Where survey data shows that scrub jays are no longer found, the review area will be reduced accordingly. Conversely, the review area will be expanded where new scrub jay observations are made." This review is necessary because scrub jays can and will move outside of known zones and these newly identified sites would be subject to USFWS review.

The USFWS's annual Charlotte County scrub jay review for 2008 identified an increase of nearly 2,000 vacant lots over 2007 totals in the county where property owners and potential developers must be cognizant of impacting potential scrub jay habitats.

These new data sets have now been added to the county's website search data base system. The 2007 review identified 10,174 vacant lots. These additional 1,981 vacant lots will require a review, prior to development. The property owner may want to have a scrub jay survey performed to make a definitive determination of the scrub jay's presence. The county created a data base system from information provided by the USFWS that identifies documented locations where scrub jays are found. It can be accessed via the county's Website: CharlotteCountyFL.com. Property owners preparing to apply for building permits should check the data base to assess the possible affect on their projects.

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This information provided by the USFWS helps potential land developers understand where scrub-jays are likely to be found and additional coordination will be required. All precautions should be taken prior to development within Florida scrub jay review areas. Vacant lots within the scrub jay review areas are not necessarily occupied by scrub jays. To determine this, a scrub jay survey would need to be conducted.

The increase in vacant lots can be attributed to new information obtained over the last year by the USFWS, other agencies, consultants and confirmed incidental sightings. These locations have been reviewed and confirmed by the USFWS and the county. The increase in the number of lots within the review area doesn't necessarily mean an increase in the number of scrub jays, but could represent previously unknown territory and/or shift in previously estimated territories utilized by the scrub jay as estimated by the USFWS.

The county received a \$226,390 federal grant from the USFWS to develop a countywide conservation plan to address protecting scrub jays. For more scrub jay information from the USFWS, residents/developers should call (772) 562-3909, extension 245.

Editor's Note: This data base is information currently available and is subject to change. It has been documented that scrub jays can and will move outside of known zones and these newly identified properties would be subject to USFWS review. Charlotte County is home to various federal and state protected wildlife species. Performing environmental due diligence is important to safe guard your financial investment, while protecting our natural resources.

Contacts: Ken Warren, USFWS at (772) 562-3909, x323 and Andy Stevens, Charlotte County Natural Resources Division at (941) 764-4383