

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

Universal Criteria

UC #1 Resources must be visible from the roadway.

The Graphic Depiction beginning on page 40 illustrates some of the scenic, natural, recreational, and historic resources visible from the roadway. A series of loop roads provide access to numerous resources that have been identified as areas of possible future corridor consideration.

UC #2 The corridor must “tell a story” that relates to its intrinsic resources.

The “story” of Scenic 441 is inherent in its landscape, a rural remnant of “old Florida” rich in natural and cultural resources. Famed naturalist Archie Carr described Paynes Prairie, the Corridor’s signature resource as:

“... a solid thing to hold to in world all broken out with man. There is peace out there, and quiet to hear the rails call, and the cranes bugling in the sky ...”

Historic Micanopy extols its frontier past, and points the way to Cross Creek, the home of north Florida’s most famous literary resident, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. Just beyond its southern terminus, Victorian McIntosh and Orange Lake serve as a reminder that this corridor was once the heart of Florida’s citrus industry.

The Statement of Significance on page 4 further describes the story of this corridor. A more detailed description of many of the corridor’s intrinsic resources begins on page 27.

UC #3 The roadway must be a public roadway that safely accommodates two-wheel drive automobiles.

U.S. 441 is a four-lane United States highway. It is a part of the state highway system, a principle arterial roadway, and a federal aid primary roadway.

UC #4 The corridor must exhibit significant, exceptional, and distinctive features of the region it traverses.

The Graphic Depictions in this report and attached video

demonstrate the outstanding quality of the resources found along the US 441 corridor. The sections on Environmental Conditions and resource specific criteria discuss the cultural, natural, and historic significance of the features found along the roadway. See also the Statement of Significance.

UC #5 The roadway must be at least one mile in length, and if appropriate provide access to the resources.

The proposed scenic highway is approximately twelve miles long bounded by SR 331 (Williston Road) at the northern end and the Alachua/Marion County line at the southern end. SR 331 was determined to be the northern terminus since it is the first major road north of Paynes Prairie before entering urban Gainesville. The Alachua/Marion County line was determined to be the southern terminus because Alachua County and Micanopy supported its consideration and because the roadway retains its scenic character to this point, and it is a popular route for traversing the state. The corridor is bounded laterally by the viewshed from US 441.

UC #6 A majority of the corridor must exhibit the qualifying resources. These resources should be as continuous as possible, for the present and the future.

The written description of the corridor found in the Graphic Depiction on page 40 details the location and type of resources found along the corridor. The selected corridor demonstrates scenic continuity throughout its length. The relatively high percentage of public lands along the corridor, coupled with future land use designations that are consistent with the scenic qualities of the corridor, will help assure continuity for the future.

UC #7 A Corridor Advocacy Group (CAG) must be organized to support the scenic highway designation.

The Corridor Advocacy Group was officially formed on October 21, 1999. See appended attendance lists at CAG meetings and Appendix 4 for the Operating Rules and Procedures that govern the decision-making process. The group is a joint project of the Northwest Marion Land Trust and Sustainable Alachua County. Representatives of Alachua County, Marion County, and Micanopy sit on the Corridor Advocacy Group, along with other interested persons.

UC #8 A Community Participation Program must be developed and implemented.

The public was made aware of the Corridor Advocacy Group's activities through public media, signs posted in public locations along the corridor, and newspaper articles covering the topic. A database of property owners was compiled and all property owners were notified of meetings to discuss the application process. A property owner subcommittee has been established and is chaired by two CAG members who own property and live along the corridor.

The CAG has presented to the Alachua County Commission (2 times), the Marion County Commission (2 times), the Micanopy Commission (2 times), and the McIntosh Town Council in order to notify public officials of the process and to encourage their participation. Alachua County and Micanopy have officially endorsed the project.

Memorandum and announcements are mailed to all members of the CAG prior to and following each public meeting in order to keep all members abreast of the progress and decisions being made. Meeting announcements are mailed and e-mailed to all members of the CAG who demonstrate continued interest in participating.

UC #9 Strong local support must be demonstrated.

Letters of support from Alachua County and the St. John's River Water Management District are included, and the Town of Micanopy adopted a resolution in support of the scenic designation. The Alachua County Commission and the town Council of Micanopy have requested this eligibility determination on behalf of their citizens. Merchants along the corridor have also expressed support. In order to build additional support for designation, the CAG intends to continue its efforts to reach out to individuals and groups that may be interested in or affected by scenic highway designation for US 441. The CAG is chaired by representatives of local grassroots organizations who participate on behalf of their membership.

UC #10 A Corridor Management Plan must be developed with the endorsement of local government(s).

The CAG plans to develop the Corridor Management Plan, pursuant to Florida Scenic Highway Program requirements, upon finding of eligibility.

Resource Specific Criteria

Natural Environment

*Prepared by Scott Heynen and Elizabeth Wiese,
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The natural landscape along Highway 441 consists of a wide variety of community types characteristic of north central Florida, ranging from freshwater marshes and lakes to sandhill and hardwood forests.

Before man's influence on the natural systems of this area, the landscape ranged from freshwater marshes in the northern areas (currently Paynes Prairie), to an area dominated by intermediate scrub and hardwood marsh, to uplands dominated by sandhill and hardwood forest in the southern areas (currently south of Orange Lake). The diversity of habitat types in this area can be attributed to natural phenomena, such as flooding and fire, and to the area's physical features, such as elevation changes and karst topography*. (*Karst topography can be defined as a landscape surface containing many connections to the aquifer due to a porous limestone geological base close to the surface.) The northern portion of the roadway is lower and lies over karst topography. It is dominated by marsh and wetland habitats. Moving south, the topography begins to rise and areas become dryer, with different soil types. In the past, the area south of Orange Lake was predominantly sandhill and upland forest community types, containing Red Oak forests and Longleaf Pine forests. In the transition areas between the low marshes and the upland forests were valuable habitat types such as shrub and pine scrub. These different, intermediate communities were spatially varied.

Remnants of these past community types still exist along the Highway 441 corridor. Moving south from Gainesville, the landscape adjacent to 441 is initially Southern hardwood forest, containing live oaks (*Quercus virginiana*), sabal palms (*Sabal palmetto*), and some pines. The roadway then traverses Paynes Prairie; a highland freshwater marsh and protected State Preserve area. Paynes Prairie is one of the region's most valuable natural resources. It is directly connected to the Floridian Aquifer and its wetland community types provide habitat for a number of endangered or



Oak and Pineland Remnant

threatened species. Paynes Prairie offers a wonderful panoramic view across the expansive, open marshland, with views of seasonal wildflowers and many types of wildlife.

The landscape south of the Prairie is similar to the hardwood forest to the north, but is interspersed with native or planted pines and wetlands. Associated with these pinelands are the first areas of pine and shrub scrub, which indicate a movement from the lowlands into the transition landscape. The karst topography is still evidenced by landscape features such as Lake Wauberg north of Micanopy and Lake Tuscawilla south of Micanopy. Wetland and marsh habitats containing a wide variety of tree and herbaceous species, such as red maple (*Acer rubrum*), Southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*), and sabal palms (*Sabal palmetto*) emerge occasionally from the dominant hardwood forest.

Natural Resources

A wide variety of natural resources exist along S.R. 441. These valuable areas create opportunities to:

1. View and interpret the natural landscape.
2. Reveal the landscape patterns that dominated this region in the past.
3. Demonstrate the importance of native phenomena such as fire and flooding in shaping the landscape.



View across Paynes Prairie

Paynes Prairie, at the north end of the corridor, is a regionally important natural resource. Because the prairie has been protected as a State Preserve, a wide variety of community types remain. The prairie's dominant freshwater marsh community is large and contiguous enough to be a functional size for many wetland species. These marsh habitats are connected to surrounding uplands through a gradient of different community types. These associations create many microhabitats that contribute to the presence of a wider variety of species than in strictly wetland or upland areas. Diverse community types such as hardwood swamp, freshwater marsh, hardwood hammock, and sandhill are all contained within the preserve. There are a number of endangered species that inhabit these communities, such as the Florida sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis pratensis*), American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*), and bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*).

Paynes Prairie is also important as a regional aquifer recharge area. The prairie is characterized by an extremely karst topography, with a number of larger sinks into the Floridian aquifer. The water level of the prairie fluctuates due to the varying depth of the aquifer, and these periodic level changes determine the natural structure of the prairie landscape. Due to the preservation of varied community types, unique habitats, and an unusual physical nature, Paynes Prairie is a highly valuable and easily accessible natural resource along the 441 corridor.

Tuscawilla Lake and Lake Wauberg also provide valuable habitat as well as opportunities for visual interpretation of the natural landscape. Both are in the northern part of the corridor and provide smaller contiguous areas of habitats. Lake Wauberg provides an excellent open water community with surrounding hardwood marshes and some cypress marshes. Tuscawilla Lake is more like Paynes Prairie, predominantly freshwater marsh and wet prairie habitats. These two sites show how different the landscape can look due to small variations in the karst topography.



The driving experience along Highway 441 therefore provides a great opportunity to view, interpret, and access the natural resources within and adjacent to the roadway corridor. The variety of habitat types with which the corridor interacts is unique to this roadway, and the roadway should be managed in order to enhance the driver's experience of these special resources.

Historic Resources

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Highway 441 runs north/south along a ridge that divides the drainage basins of the Ocklawaha and Withlacoochee River systems. It is part of an old trail system that intersected the crossroads of Micanopy, the area's oldest consecutively inhabited site. A United States Army Engineer's map from 1839 shows the Tuscawilla trail running very close to the location of the current highway. This system connected the numerous outposts that were established to police and deter Indian uprisings.

US 441 carried the two additional names of Wire Road and Orange Blossom Trail, linking the towns of Micanopy and Ocala. During the 1920's, the highway was extended across the Prairie by local crews and was graded, straightened and made into a two-lane road with the labor provided by chain gangs. The 1956 Federal Highways Act initiated further construction, which widened the highway into four lanes. The region along the corridor of US 441 reflects the profound affects of humans on the landscape. The traces of their habitation from prehistory to the present form the historical resources along the corridor.

The earliest culture that left its impression on the corridor's land was composed of nomadic tribesmen who arrived on the Florida peninsula 15,000-10,000 years ago during the last great Ice Age. These Paleo-Indians migrated in search of animals like the mastodons, woolly mammoths, camels, and giant land tortoises that inhabited the much cooler and dryer climate of pre-historic Florida. Water sources in the area had not yet evolved into the river systems familiar to us today, but were sought by these people in shallow lakes or prairies where limestone rock layers near the surface formed catch basins. These basin systems are of particular interest because they are currently being utilized by the area's horse industry.

The dryer climate familiar to the Paleo-Indian of Florida also produced unique ecosystems of various grasses and scrub that are now rare. Presently, travelers of 441 experience one of these remnants of the Ice Age while crossing Payne's Prairie preserve. In addition to being a snapshot of previously widespread ecosystems, the preserve documents Paleo-Indian history through artifacts found in archaeological sites on the prairie.

Three groups of the Timucuan-speaking people of Florida arrived in Alachua and Marion counties after 3000 BC, replacing their paleo-predecessors. Just like the earlier inhabitants, the people of the Ocala, Potano and Acuera societies hunted and gathered, but combined these skills with crop-raising. They were the first known cultures to raise crops in the Marion-Alachua region, producing corn, beans and squash.

The Timucuan population was numbered among the estimated 350,000

people who inhabited the Florida Peninsula when the Spanish arrived in the late 1600s. In the short span of 100 years European diseases and the slave raids of the northern Creek Indians would devastate their cultures, opening the abandoned farming lands to the next wave of immigrants.

During the late 1600s, the headquarters of the largest cattle ranch of Spanish Florida was also located on present day Paynes Prairie State Preserve. Named after its sinkhole, Rancho de la Chua prospered tremendously from its cattle livestock. It traded frequently with the fort of St. Augustine, but most likely made the more lucrative trades with Cuba. The ranch had a colorful past of bucaneer raidings, rescues by Timucuan, and illegal cattle drives that spanned the colonial years of 1646-1705.

By the 1720's, most of the rancheros were burned down with the incoming English rule. The legacy of the Spanish cattle barons continued with the Creeks (Seminole) who began to fill the vacated territories of the Spanish. The Seminole captured the hastily abandoned cattle and horses of the Spanish and cultivated a prosperous ranching, farming, and trading economy.

By the time the naturalist and explorer William Bartram arrived in the Seminole village of Cuscowilla, near the present day town of Micanopy, Cowkeeper, chief of the Oconee and his people were prospering in the foot steps of the banished Spanish. Bartram noted thickets of thorny wild orange trees in the vicinity west of Lake Orange that the Indians used to deter their enemies from trespassing. Today, sturdy Spanish horses used by the Seminole have been kept from extinction through the efforts of private citizens and the park management team of Payne's Prairie. The small shaggy horse has been given free range within the park system, preserving the historic qualities of the region.

In 1821, the United States purchased Florida from Spain prompting massive land-grabs by white settlers. Many forts, including Ft. Wacahoota, Ft. Drane, and Ft. King were set up along the 441 corridor during this period to protect American settlers from the Seminole. Several clashes between the two cultures resulted in three Seminole wars. Florida's first governor, Andrew Jackson, who the Indians called Sharp Knife, led many of the battles. The conflicts were resolved with the signing of a treaty and evacuation of the Seminole to

a reservation south of Orange Lake in 1824. By 1830, all treaties with Indians east of the Mississippi were broken, ending Indian habitation in Alachua and Marion counties. The Seminoles responded with guerilla warfare during the second Seminole Wars. One well-known battle erupted on the south side of Paynes Prairie.

In the 1820's several plantations owners moved from the north, where soil was "worn out", to the Lake Orange area. By the 1850's, the 15 or more plantations were producing cash crops in Marion County. Products of local plantations included sugarcane, citrus, turpentine, lumber, cattle and race horses. Plantation owners were politically powerful and were granted positions within the government. John McIver McIntosh, owner of a plantation near the town named in honor of him, was appointed first judge of probate for the new county of Marion.

The majority of the county's planters did not own slaves, because they were worth more than the land they groomed. The average acre cost approximately \$13 compared to a slave at the cost of \$560. Marion County's population increased significantly to 6% of the total population of Florida when the Civil War broke; of the 8,609 residents, the majority was African American.

During the war, many of the women were left to manage the properties while 90% of Euro-American men were serving in the Confederate Army. Much of Marion and Alachua counties' livestock was shipped and driven along trails leading northward in order to sustain southern armies comprised of friends and family.

A new era of agriculture began along 441 in the late 1800's with the aid of better transportation. Railroads moved agricultural goods to northern markets and brought wealthy vacationers from the industrialized areas of North America and Europe to Silver Springs. Towns like Micanopy, McIntosh, Evinston, and Ocala were all connected by rail.

Steamboats operated on Paynes Prairie when the Alachuan sink clogged. The prairie was inundated and called Lake Alachua. The state legislature passed an act making the water navigable. The Alachua Steam Navigation and Canal Company moved agricultural freight on Lake Alachua. The lake was connected by a series of canals that connected to Lake Orange and the nearby Oklawaha River.

The citrus industry developed around this transportation system. A major freeze in the late 1880's proved to be a temporary set back to the industry, which rebounded and peaked during the 1940s with 25,000 acres planted in citrus. With less labor-intensive citrus cultivation, farmers had the luxury of living in town. After the freezes in the 1980's, the industry left the area. Today, 75% of the state's citrus is grown south of Orlando.

The produce industry has also impacted the local economy over the past 100 years. Before the corporate buyers cut out the local brokerages, fortunes were made as the farmers vied for the chance to fill orders requested from Midwestern and northeastern regions of the country. Early 19th century farmers competed with the West Indies for early market domination by providing northerners with cool weather crops of cucumbers, tomatoes, cabbages, onions, and spinach. Watermelon was grown during warmer months.

Today, farm sizes in Alachua County range between 2-216 acres. Many of the same products grown in earlier times are still farmed, in addition to peanuts, blueberries, corn, tobacco, nursery plants, and silviculture. Small roadside vegetable stands dot the edges of 441, with farmers selling their wares to passing motorists. Boiled peanuts are a roadside staple. The most enduring of the region's agricultural practices is the cattle industry with an average 30,000 heads sold annually. Cattle pastures are a key contribution to the corridor's scenic character.

The agricultural character of the landscape has been an enduring theme from the Timucuan fields to the rural communities of the early part of this century depicted in Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings writings. The cattle and horse pastures are examples of the continuing relevance of this theme today. The region reminds us of a significant portion of Florida history. Governor Chiles recognized the historic value of the corridor and walked through it on his 1970 march from Pensacola to Miami.

Sources

Fernald, Edward (1992). Atlas of Florida. Florida: The University Press of Florida.

Payne' Prairie State Park. Ranchero de la Chua.

Payne' Prairie State Park. [Seminole Indians](#).
Payne' Prairie State Park. [The Spanish Horses of Florida](#).
www.starbanner.com

Recreation

*Prepared by Scott Heynen and Elizabeth Wiese, Landscape
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The US 441 corridor and its adjacent lands have drawn people to them for many years, and have provided a wide array of leisure and recreation opportunities.

Bicycling is a major recreational use of the corridor. Bicycling advocates have taken an interest in the 441 corridor as a result of the unfortunate accidents that have occurred along that roadway. The possible widening of the shoulder and the addition of rumble strips from Williston Road to the Micanopy Bypass are in part the result of their involvement. The Corridor Advocacy Group (CAG) intends to work with cycling advocates to develop a transportation system that accommodates their needs.

The natural environment and its recreational opportunities are the result of unique resources and the conservation of them, as well as a concerted effort to utilize resources and conservation areas for the integration of cultural and natural interpretation. The primary natural recreation areas include the Paynes Prairie State Preserve, Lochloosa Wildlife Management Area, and Orange Lake, which is adjacent to the Marjorie Kinnan Rawling's homestead. These three State preserved lands provide habitat and conservation value to the corridor while also allowing recreation within them.

The Paynes Prairie State Preserve offers a variety of passive and active recreation. It has a managed visitor center, and offers fishing, camping, boating, horse trails, nature trails, picnicking, biking, and wildlife viewing. The lake teams with alligator, and limited harvest has become a tradition. Paynes Prairie State Preserve has always taken an interest in US 441, since it crosses their property. Indeed, the access the road provides helped to spur the establishment of the preserve. The extensive winter flooding of the roadway in 1998 caused an increase in the number of wildlife deaths along the corridor, and as a result, a wildlife barrier and

crossings are soon to be installed along the portion of 441 that runs through the prairie.

The Lochloosa Wildlife Management Area offers less managed recreational opportunities. The primary activities include hunting, hiking, biking, and wildlife viewing. Orange Lake provides all the amenities and recreation of a large water feature. These include: boating, fishing, swimming, hiking, and wildlife viewing.

In addition to recreational opportunities provided by natural resources, some have developed around cultural resources like the horse industry. As previously mentioned, Paynes Prairie currently offers a series of trails for riders.

Sources

Ted Geltner. "Alai & Well?". M: Marion's Magazine For The Millennium. September 1999.

Soffian, Seth. "The New Breeds". M: Marion's Magazine For The Millennium. September 1999.

Other Programs

Alachua County Scenic Highways Ordinance

Alachua county has enacted a local scenic highways ordinance. Currently none of the local roads within the Scenic Highway System discussed in this report have been designated under the ordinance, although many qualify. However, the Town of Micanopy is interested in pursuing designation of its main street under this program.

Gainesville Bicycling Club

The Gainesville Cycling Club is a not for profit organization that promotes riding in North Central Florida. The group sponsors an annual ride known as the "Horse Farm 100" that includes a significant stretch of U.S. 441 in Alachua and Marion Counties. The ride was recently given the honor of "Best Weekend Ride" by the League of American Bicyclists.

Micanopy Heritage Park Initiative

The Town of Micanopy recently announced its interest in developing a conceptual plan for the Town based on the concept of a "Heritage Park." The Heritage Park concept

would promote the Town's rural character and encourage heritage tourism.

City of Gainesville Urban Streetscaping Plan

Although not within the currently proposed corridor limits, the City of Gainesville is exploring the development of streetscaping plan to improve the visual quality of U.S. 441 between the University of Florida and the northern limit of the proposed scenic corridor.

Legacy Lands Initiative

With the backing of the Alachua County Land Acquisition Advisory Committee, a citizen's group has recently begun promoting an initiative to develop a bond financed land acquisition of environmentally important lands which would permit resource based recreation.

FDOT Wildlife Underpasses Project

The Florida Department of Transportation is completing a construction project along the section of the proposed corridor that runs through Paynes Prairie State Preserve. The demonstration project involves the installation of wildlife barriers along the highway and oversize culverts under the highway to channel wildlife crossings and reduce wildlife mortality.

The Idlewyld/Serenola Special Overlay District

The Serenola Special Overlay District is a zoning classification that overlays the portion of the proposed scenic corridor that runs from the northern limit of the corridor to the north rim of Paynes Prairie State Preserve. The overlay district is designed to protect the rural character of this portion of the scenic highway as a buffer to the entrance onto the Prairie.

Cross Creek Special Land Use Area

Historic Cross Creek and its environs have been designated a Special Land Use Area under the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan. The designation is intended to protect the rural character of the landscape made famous by

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. Cross Creek is an important heritage tourism feature that can be easily accessed from the Scenic Corridor.

Adopt a Road Program

Various entities have adopted sections of the proposed scenic corridor, including the Gainesville Herpetological Society, which has adopted the section that runs through Paynes Prairie.

Alachua County Cell Tower Master Plan

Alachua county is currently considering a cell tower master plan to manage and control the distribution of cellular phone signal towers.