

**CONDOMINIUMS, TRAILER PARKS, AND HIGH-INTENSITY
FIRES: THE FUTURE OF SAND PINE
SCRUB PRESERVES IN FLORIDA**

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ABSTRACT

Sand pine scrub, a pine/evergreen sclerophyllous shrub community endemic to Florida, is maintained by infrequent, high-intensity fires. These fires kill the vegetation to the ground but release seeds from serotinous-coned sand pine and stimulate resprouting or seed germination of the shrubs. Scrub is habitat for 21 federally listed endangered or threatened species, all of which depend on the scrub fire regime. This paper reviewed the biological attributes of scrub, the role fire plays in maintaining various scrub habitats, and management implications for the community as Florida's burgeoning population and phenomenal rate of development threaten remaining scrubs.

Scrub is found on dry sand ridges that are prime citrus land and development property. About 80 percent of upland ecosystems on central Florida sand ridges have already been converted to citrus groves, subdivisions, and recreational vehicle parks. Virtually all of the larger unprotected scrubs have been subdivided and are for sale as residential lots. Because rare scrub endemics are not uniformly distributed throughout the range of scrub, only a state-wide system of scrub preserves would protect all of the endangered species.

A scrub preserve system has been proposed and some sites have already been acquired. Such a system, however, will inevitably include small parcels imbedded in a landscape dominated by roads, condominiums, and RV parks. Small size of scrub remnants, loss of interconnectivity with related ecosystems, and fire control problems associated with scrub fuels require innovative approaches to fire management, vegetation manipulation, and preserve design if we are to maintain representative examples of the scrub ecosystem. The long-term effect of various options is virtually unknown, leaving the future of sand pine scrub uncertain.