

## 6.0 Conservation Element Goals, Objectives, and Policies

**Goal 6.1 • To sustain Santa Rosa County’s abundant and vital natural resources for current and future residents, recognizing these resources as invaluable contributors to human health, quality of life, and economic sustainability.**

**Objective 6.1.A • Conserve, appropriately use, and protect the quality of waters that flow into the bays, bayous, Santa Rosa Sound, and the Gulf of Mexico through appropriate land use planning, environmental regulation, and education.**

Policy 6.1.A.1 • Wetlands protection in Santa Rosa County will continue to be a cooperative effort between the County, the public, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE), and the Northwest Florida Water Management District. For purposes of this Comprehensive Plan, wetlands are defined as those wetlands under the jurisdiction of the FDEP or the USACOE (jurisdictional wetlands). In reviewing applications for development approval (development orders issued by the County), the County shall use the National Wetlands Inventory Map, the Santa Rosa County Soil Survey, and digital ortho-photography as indicators of the potential presence of wetlands. However, it is the responsibility of the applicant to delineate any known jurisdictional wetlands on any site plan submitted for development approval. If a parcel is determined to have wetlands potential, the County will refer the applicant to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Northwest Florida Water Management District, and/or the US Army Corps of Engineers for a site-specific wetlands determination and such determination shall be used to determine the buildable area of the parcel or lot. Protection or mitigation of the wetlands, as determined in the site-specific survey, shall be afforded during and after construction activities. In accordance with the permitting processes of these agencies.

6.1.A.2 • When reviewing proposed amendments to the Future Land Use Map, onsite wetland impacts will be considered. If the amendment area contains indications of wetlands per the National Wetlands Inventory Map, the Santa Rosa County Soil Survey, or digital ortho-photography the applicant must demonstrate avoidance of any added impacts to such wetland areas. The applicant may be required to submit a survey indicating the location of jurisdictional wetlands along with preliminary site plans demonstrating the potential impact of development under the proposed Future Land Use designation vs potential impact under the current Future Land Use Map category.

Policy 6.1.A.3 • A Land uses that are consistent with the Future Land Use Map will be allowed so long as they are designed to avoid or minimize impact on jurisdictional wetlands. Where avoidance or minimization is not possible, wetland impacts may be mitigated as required by the agency or agencies having jurisdiction. Where avoidance or minimization is possible, the County will not issue a development approval for development within jurisdictional wetlands, except for incidental impacts such as those required for access to the site, internal circulation, infrastructure, boardwalks, etc.

Policy 6.1.A.4 • New lots in residential or commercial subdivisions reviewed by the County pursuant to the applicable Land Development Code subdivision review requirements shall not be created and/or platted that do not contain sufficient buildable upland areas in order to provide a reasonable use for the lot under the requirements of the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 6.1.A.5 • Vegetated buffers will also be required between development and free-flowing streams, rivers, lakes, bays, basins, and bayous. Such buffers will have a minimum width of 15 feet. Minor encroachments are permitted for such things as docks, piers, or similar structures, and recreational access. Variances to this requirement shall only be granted when strict application of the requirement limits all reasonable use of the property as allowed by the Future Land Use Map. When development is designed to allow untreated stormwater to discharge into wetlands, a vegetated natural buffer shall be required in accordance with DEP standards and shall be designated on the site plan or recorded plat.

Policy 6.1.A.6 • For the purposes of protecting the shoreline and/or wetlands, the County may allow (or require) clustering of development upland from wetlands or landward of the shoreline.

Policy 6.1.A.7 • Illegal development in wetland areas shall be reported. Consistent with applicable law, it will be required that these areas shall be restored and/or mitigated.

Policy 6.1.A.8 • Dredge and fill activities shall be reviewed and permitted by the appropriate agencies to assure that environmental impacts are minimized, and that the requirements of the County are met before final approval is granted.

Policy 6.1.A.9 • *Reserved*

Policy 6.1.A.10 • Septic tanks and their associated drain fields shall be prohibited within wetland areas unless permitted by the Florida Department of Health/County Health Department. The use of septic tanks in Garcon Point and the area South of East River will be further limited as detailed in Policy 4.1.B.7 of the Infrastructure Element.

Policy 6.1.A.11 • The County shall discourage the discharge of any new or upgraded public or private sanitary sewer facility into the estuarine waters of the County.

**Objective 6.1.B • To conserve, appropriately use, and protect natural groundwater recharge areas and wellhead protection areas.**

Policy 6.1.B.1 • The County shall protect water quality by restricting or prohibiting activities known to adversely affect the quality or quantity of identified water sources including natural groundwater recharge areas, wellhead protection areas and surface waters used as a source of public water supply. In addition, the County adopts wellhead protection zones of 500 foot radius for Floridan Aquifer and Sand and Gravel Aquifer public supply water wells, measured from the center of the wellhead. Activity within these zones will be limited according to the standards found in Policy 4.4.B.10 of the Infrastructure Element.

Policy 6.1.B.2 • In cooperation with the Northwest Florida Water Management District, the County shall implement any emergency water conservation plans necessary to protect water sources during periods of insufficient supply within the Floridan or Sand and Gravel Aquifers.

**Objective 6.1.C • To protect air quality in Santa Rosa County in order to maintain a healthy living environment for all residents.**

Policy 6.1.C.1 • The County shall maintain air quality within its jurisdiction in conformance with state and federal air quality guidelines. The County shall notify the operator of any facility that is believed to be degrading air quality within the County of such degradation. In addition, the County shall notify the appropriate regulatory agency and encourage the agency to investigate the potential violation of air quality standards and guidelines.

Policy 6.1.C.2 • New developments with the potential to emit pollutants into the air will be required to obtain the necessary permits from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency prior to authorization of a development permit by the County.

Policy 6.1.C.3 • The County shall continue to require any development with point source emissions which may degrade air quality to comply with all applicable federal and state regulations regarding emission control. These regulations may include the installation of scrubbers, emission treatment facilities and the like.

Policy 6.1.C.4 • The County shall continue to cooperate with the Department of Environmental Protection so that minimum air quality levels, established by the Department, are maintained.

Policy 6.1.C.5 • The County shall encourage the development of ancillary or neighborhood type commercial development near or adjacent to residential centers for the purposes of decreasing air pollution generated by automobile travel.

Policy 6.1.C.6 • The County support alternative transportation choice such as mass transit and bicycle and pedestrian options.

**Objective 6.1.D • To conserve, protect, and appropriately use soils, minerals and native vegetative communities including forests.**

Policy 6.1.D.1 • The County shall continue to enforce regulations in the current building code that limit land uses or construction techniques to those compatible with soil conditions specific to the site. The regulations shall include boring and soils test conducted by testing facilities licensed by the State of Florida, when necessary.

Policy 6.1.D.2 • The County shall continue to cooperate with officials of other local governments within Santa Rosa County to conserve, appropriately use, or protect unique vegetative communities located within more than one jurisdiction.

Policy 6.1.D.3 • Extraction of minerals or other natural resources shall be permitted only where compatible with adjacent land uses and where minimal resource degradation will occur. Also, resource extraction in environmentally sensitive areas that cannot be restored shall be prohibited. Note: It is not the intent of this policy to impact routine silvicultural or agricultural activities.

Policy 6.1.D.4 • The County shall require the protection of certain trees during development or construction activities. The location of protected trees shall be included on site plans submitted for approval so that identification of these resources, and protection for the resources, is accommodated in advance of development approval.

Policy 6.1.D.5 • The County shall coordinate with State and Federal agencies on new available vegetative and wildlife data at least once a year.

Policy 6.1.D.6 • The County shall require the preservation of native vegetative communities on County owned land to the maximum extent feasible.

Policy 6.1.D.7 • Commercial mining and excavation activities shall be prohibited within the Conservation/Recreation areas designated on the Future Land Use Map.

**Objective 6.1.E • To conserve and protect environmentally sensitive lands. Environmentally sensitive lands are defined as wetlands under the jurisdiction of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; floodplains as identified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency; free-flowing streams, rivers, lakes, bays, basins, and bayous; and wildlife habitat within publicly-owned lands managed for conservation use.**

Policy 6.1.E.1 • Consistent with Policy 1.1.D.4 of the Future Land Use Element, the County shall require buffers between development and environmentally sensitive lands. The purpose of the buffer is to protect natural resources from the activities and impacts of development.

Policy 6.1.E.2 • New public infrastructure shall be planned and designed to be compatible with adjacent land uses, both existing and future, and shall not promote increased development located in environmentally sensitive lands beyond that allowed by the Future Land Use Map.

**Objective 6.1.F • Conserve, appropriately use and protect fisheries, fishery habitats, wildlife, wildlife habitats and other marine or wildlife resources in the County.**

Policy 6.1.F.1 • The County shall cooperate with the Department of Environmental Protection, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, or other State or Federal agencies so as to provide the fullest protection to marine or wildlife habitats that may be impacted by existing or proposed development within Santa Rosa County. The County shall forward to the regulatory agencies copies of application for development approval anytime such application may impact the resources described in this policy or Objective 6.1.F.

Policy 6.1.F.2 • The protection of critical habitat shall be evaluated on a site development basis. For developments on property known to support endangered or threatened species and

species of special concern of plants or animals, the developer shall be required to notify the appropriate Federal, State and Regional agencies and must comply with the appropriate guidelines and laws that protect endangered or threatened species and species of special concern. Policy

Policy 6.1.F.3 • All species of sea turtles which nest on the sand beaches fronting the Gulf of Mexico shall be protected from human interference including, but not limited to, beach re-nourishment, beach front lighting, coastal construction, armoring, erosion control structures (sandbags, geoweb) and mechanical beach cleaning which could harm sea turtles and their nesting sites during nesting season. This protection shall be afforded during the FDEP coastal construction permitting process.

Policy 6.1.F.4 • Development of vacant lands adjacent to Outstanding Florida Waters, Aquatic Preserves, Wildlife Sanctuaries, State Preserves, Sanctuaries and Wildlife Management Areas shall be designed to a scale and intensity which is consistent with the existing adjacent uses; and shall be required, at a minimum, to meet all applicable Federal, State and local drainage and water quality standards.

Policy 6.1.F.5 • Seawall and other shoreline modifications shall be discouraged, or at a minimum set landward of, the mean high water line, except as provided by law.

Policy 6.1.F.6 • The County shall continue to protect existing natural reservations as identified in the Recreation and Open Space Element of this Plan.

