

## **CONSERVATION ELEMENT**

### **GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**

**GOAL 1:** The City of Port St. Joe will conserve, protect, and appropriately manage the natural resources described in the Conservation Element of the Plan to ensure the highest environmental quality possible consistent with applicable state and federal laws.

**OBJECTIVE 1.1:** The City will continue to monitor and ensure compliance with established minimum air quality standards.

**Policy 1.1.1:** Proposed developments which have the potential to lessen ambient air quality will be required to obtain state and federal permits before review of local development application can proceed

**Policy 1.1.2:** An ambient air monitoring station is presently located at the City's Wastewater Treatment Plant and will continue to monitor ambient air quality

**OBJECTIVE 1.2:** The City will conserve and protect the quality and quantity of current and projected water sources and waters that flow into the estuarine waters by implementing Policies 1.2.1 through 1.2.3.

**Policy 1.2.1:** The City will make improvements to drainage and stormwater system components. Projects will be undertaken in accordance with the schedule provided in the Capital Improvements Element of this Plan.

**Policy 1.2.2:** The City will cooperate with NorthWest Florida Water Management District N.W.F.W.M.D. in identifying the prime natural groundwater aquifer recharge areas and assist the N.W.F.W.M.D in monitoring groundwater quality levels, and conditions for the possibility of salt water intrusion.

**Policy 1.2.3:** Activities that would withdraw groundwater to the point of salt water intrusion or would damage important identified water sources including existing cones of influence, water, recharge areas, inflow to surface public water supply resources and water wells, are recognized as being detrimental to the City's environment and economy and shall be referred to the NWFWMMD to be addressed under that agency's authority.

**Policy 1.2.4:** The City will adopt procedures for emergency water conservation in accordance with the plans and guidance of the NorthWest Florida Water Management District. (N.W.F.W.M.D.)

**Objective 1.3:** Minimize erosion, sedimentation and stormwater runoff.

**Policy 1.3.1:** The City shall undertake measures to reduce stormwater pollution loads into adjacent water bodies by maintaining an on-going program of stormwater management, including both regulation and capital improvements. The City will review development proposals for necessary stormwater management facility needs and require stormwater

permits pursuant to the Environmental Resource Permit provisions of Rule 62-346, F.A.C. prior to the issuance of final development approval.

**Policy 1.3.2:** The City shall minimize land use disturbance, clearing of native vegetation and removal of top soil. The City shall encourage utilization of Low Impact Design (LID) strategies and techniques and construction best management practices (BMPs), such as use of silt fences and sediment basins to retain sediment onsite during development.

**Policy 1.3.3:** The following general requirements shall apply to stormwater management systems throughout the City:

- a) No direct discharge of stormwater to waterways or waterbodies;
- b) When soil and water table conditions allow, require the use of offsite retention systems for stormwater treatment.
- c) Promote the use of BMPs and the “Treatment Train” concept by promoting the use of swales and landscape infiltration systems;
- d) Swale conveyances shall be used to the greatest extent possible;
- e) Projects in areas zoned for Industrial land uses shall assure that industrial pollutants do not enter the stormwater system or come in contact with the surface or ground water.

**OBJECTIVE 1.4:** The City will conserve and protect its natural resources, including fisheries, wildlife, wildlife habitat, marine habitat, minerals, soils and native vegetative communities.

**Policy 1.4.1:** The City shall support the conservation and protection of ecologically sensitive terrestrial and marine ecological communities, as well as critical wildlife habitat. Land Development Regulations and development review processes will be used to minimize development impacts on these areas.

**Policy 1.4.2:** The City shall pursue the use of acquisition funding programs such as the Florida Forever Program, Florida Community Trust, DEP Office of Florida Greenways & Trails and others to acquire fee simple or less-than-fee ownership through conservation easements on land that has been identified as critical or sensitive resources.

**Policy 1.4.3:** During development review processes the City shall consider the use of other innovative approaches to protect sensitive resources, such as the transfer of development rights, clustering, performance zoning, open space zoning, on-site density transfer and other techniques to maximize the establishment of open space areas or areas of protection for identified environmental sensitive resources.

**Policy 1.4.4:** Proposed development sites will be required to be examined for the presence of state and federally protected plant and animal species prior to site clearing or construction. When a listed species is found, the proposal for development shall be submitted to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC) and DEP for recommendations to minimize the impact of development on those species. These recommendations will be considered part of the development approval process where threatened and endangered species are present.

**Policy 1.4.5:** The City shall encourage the protection of native vegetation as part of its land development regulations. Such standards shall include types and size of vegetation to be protected, removal/replacement, criteria, construction practices, and other similar provisions.

**Policy 1.4.6:** The City shall cooperate with Gulf County to protect vegetative communities located within more than one jurisdiction through application of provisions within the land development regulations.

**OBJECTIVE 1.5:** The City will conserve and protect natural resources from the effects of hazardous waste.

**Policy 1.5.1:** The City will initiate a public awareness program to inform citizens of the recycling alternatives for hazardous waste.

**Policy 1.5.2:** The City will enter into an agreement with Gulf County for temporary storage of any future hazardous waste that the City might generate based on Gulf County constructing a temporary storage/transfer facility as recommended in the 1986 Gulf County Hazardous Waste Management Assessment.

**Policy 1.5.3:** The City will continue to coordinate with the Apalachee Regional Planning Council (A.R.P.C) and the Regional Hazardous Waste Management Plan and require regional approval (permitting) before local review of any development which might have the potential to generate hazardous waste.

**Policy 1.5.4:** The City shall coordinate with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection(FDEP)on the requirements that all stationary above-ground and underground petroleum storage tanks conform to the provisions of Chapter 17-61, F.A.C., and that permits be obtained from FDEP prior to installation or removal of such tanks.

**Policy 1.5.5:** The City shall coordinate with appropriate governmental agencies that monitor small quantity generators of hazardous waste as specified under SS. 403.7234 and SS. 403.7236, F.S.

**Policy 1.5.6:** The City shall coordinate with the Florida Department of Health to provide information regarding “good gardening practices” to residents of the Mill View subdivision and encourage the use of such practices to reduce possible exposure to fill chemicals.

**Objective 1.6:** The City will continue to support the restoration of degraded natural systems.

**Policy 1.6.1:** Septic tanks will no longer be allowed within the city limits where city sewer service is available.

**Policy 1.6.2:** If natural resources are contaminated by hazardous wastes, the party responsible for the contamination will be responsible for appropriate remedial actions.

**Policy 1.6.3:** If natural systems are degraded by stormwater runoff from transportation facilities which are under the authority and maintenance of the state (Florida Department of Transportation), the City will take the necessary actions to improve the conditions by notifying appropriate state agencies.

**Objective 1.7** Wetlands within the City of Port St. Joe shall be conserved through the combined use of the City's Comprehensive Plan standards, and state and federal wetlands permitting programs involving the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), Northwest Florida Water Management District, and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), . Major wetlands and wetland systems are identified on **Map 7** of the adopted plan.

**Policy 1.7.1** The protection of wetlands shall be accomplished through the use of the Comprehensive Plan, including the Future Land Use Map, and shall take into account the type, intensity or density, extent, distribution and location of allowable land uses and the types, values, functions, sizes, conditions and locations of affected wetlands. Land uses that are incompatible with the protection of wetlands and wetland functions shall be directed away from wetlands.

**Policy 1.7.2:** The City shall continue to conserve wetlands through the implementation of its Land Development Regulations in accordance with Sec. 4.11 through Sec. 4.16.

**Policy 1.7.3:** The plan amendment process and the development review process shall require that the location and extent of wetlands (as defined by the Northwest Florida Water Management District [NFWMD], FDEP, and ACOE) within the development site be identified.

**Policy 1.7.4:** Low quality wetlands shall mean those wetlands that do not have habitat for federally threatened or endangered species or state classified rare, critically imperiled or species of special concern, and that meet at least one of the following criteria:

- a) Any wetland planted in pine or otherwise disturbed by silviculture activities
- b) Any wetland consisting of a ditch, man made canal or and borrow pit
- c) Any wetland containing timber roads or utility rights-of-way
- d) Any wetlands that are degraded due to the prevalence of exotic vegetation evidenced by the majority of the wetland containing exotic or non-native invasive species.

As of the adoption of Ordinance No. 344, in May 2007, the planting of pines, creation of new timber roads or utility right of ways within wetlands shall not result in a previously classified high quality wetland from being re-classified as low-quality.

**Policy 1.7.5:** Impacts to low quality wetlands may be authorized on a case by case basis in conjunction with and as approved by applicable regulatory agencies unless such impacts are contrary to the interest of the public. When encroachments, alterations or removal of low-quality wetlands are permitted, it shall be mitigated based on the appropriate regulatory agency including FDEP, NFWMD, and ACOE.

**Policy 1.7.6:** High quality wetlands shall mean all wetlands that do not qualify as a low quality wetland. High quality wetlands shall be protected with a 25-foot wide naturally vegetated buffer landward from the identified edge of the wetland except for those wetlands as provided in Policy 1.7.11. High quality wetlands reviewed as part of amendments to the Future Land Use Map shall be designated as Conservation on the Future Land Use Map series. \_

**Policy 1.7.7:** Development within high quality wetlands and their associated buffers shall be prohibited except for uses approved by the appropriate permitting agency involving passive recreational trails, water access, wetland maintenance and restoration. All encroachments into the 25-foot buffer shall be those that do not adversely affect the predevelopment hydrology of the wetland including water quality or quantity. Further, impacts to high quality wetlands shall be limited to cases where no other feasible and practicable alternative exists that will permit a reasonable use of the land as described in Policy 1.7.8.

**Policy 1.7.8:** The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) or the Local Planning Agency (LPA) may use the site plan and biological assessments performed by a qualified professional to determine that no reasonable alternative (such as clustering development on upland portions of the site, shifting development within the site, using variance of lot and setback requirements etc) is available to avoid proposed impacts to high quality wetlands, and that the nature and degree of disturbance is the minimum possible to achieve development that is otherwise compliant with the goals, objectives, and policies of the Plan. A finding that no reasonable alternative is available shall only be provided when the impact is identified as beneficial to an overriding public interest. Local government approval shall not substitute for state and federal regulatory review or recommendations for preservation and mitigation.

**Policy 1.7.9:** New development shall be clustered on upland portions of a development site, which are not otherwise environmentally sensitive. To facilitate the clustering of development out of and away from wetlands, deviations from minimum lot sizes and density transfers on a one-to-one basis (based on density and intensity of the current land use designation) to the buildable portion of the site, may be authorized. In no case shall the density exceed the designated gross density on the future land use map.\_

**Policy 1.7.10:** Wetlands within the current city limits of the City of Port St. Joe, which are located on property which is subject to already approved existing plats, development orders or Planned Unit Developments (P.U.Ds) approved as of January 1, 2007 shall not be subject to Conservation Element policies 1.7.1 -1.7.9.

**Policy 1.7.11:** With the exception of water dependent uses consistent with the master plan of the port of Port St. Joe and water dependent uses that serve as public access, the required setback or minimum buffer for all areas along St. Joseph Bay and coastal and riverine wetlands shall be a minimum of 50 feet as measured from the mean high water line (MHWL). Predevelopment water flow and quality shall be maintained (see Section 3.15 of the Existing LDRs as of October 1, 2006).

**Objective 1.8:** The City shall continue to increase public access to the City of Port St. Joe's water resources. Provide public boat launches and/or marinas in appropriate locations to meet water access needs and to direct these uses to areas of least environmental harm.

**Policy 1.8.1:** The City will evaluate potential sites for boat launch/ramp and parking needs. The City will work with both public and private entities to seek funding sources to develop launches/ramps and possible marinas, including land purchase costs and facility development. Potential public sources for facility development include: Florida Boating Improvement Program (FFWCC), Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (aka, FRDAP by DEP). Resources for land acquisition include the Florida Community Trust.

**Policy 1.8.2:** Encourage and support marina facilities in the City to become members of the Florida Clean Marina Program (A FDEP and USFWS sponsored program).

**Policy 1.8.3:** The City shall coordinate with the FDEP Office of Greenways and Trails, the FDCA's Florida Community Trust Office and the FDOT to track opportunities to develop community conservation and recreational attributes. Further, the City should work with private land owners to plan for conservation, trail and greenway development opportunities

**Objective: 1.9:** Conservation of fresh water supply shall be pursued.

**Policy 1.9.1:** The City shall encourage use appropriate water conservation techniques including the use of high-efficiency, low-volume plumbing fixtures, appliances and other water conserving devices.

**Policy 1.9.2:** Mixed use and larger developments in the City shall be encouraged to maintain native vegetation and to incorporate xeriscape practices and the use of native landscape plant materials into site landscaping design.

**Policy 1.9.3:** Homeowners association and businesses shall be directed to consider implementation of the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program developed by the University of Florida.

**Policy 1.9.4:** The City will continue to implement the adopted Xeriscape Ordinance to ensure conservation of water resources.

**Policy 1.9.5:** The City will recommend and request Gulf County to adopt a Xeriscape/Florida Friendly Landscape Ordinance within the unincorporated portion of the City's Water Service Area.

**Policy 1.9.6:** The City will incrementally reduce unaccounted water losses to 10% by 2015 through ongoing improvements to water distribution lines as shown in the capital improvement plan.

**Policy 1.9.7:** The City will continue to implement an adopted ordinance intended to promote and support water conservation efforts.

**Policy 1.9.8:** By December 2015, the City will consider adoption of an Irrigation Efficiency Ordinance.

**Policy 1.9.9:** The City shall continue to implement Public Education and Information Program to encourage citizens to conserve water and promote the efficient use of water resources.

**Policy 1.9.10:** The City will provide the NFWFMD a Reuse Feasibility Study per the Guidelines for Preparation of Reuse Feasibility Studies (FDEP, May 2007) by December 31, 2020.

**Objective: 1.10:** Conservation of energy and reduction of greenhouse gas shall be pursued.

**Policy 1.10.1:** Energy Conservation Areas shown in **Map 20** highlight features that contribute to reduced energy use and greenhouse production: parks, open space areas, increased network of bike and pedestrian paths and connections to provide non-auto transportation options and enhance the livability of the City. These connections will provide alternative transportation options, reduce vehicle miles traveled, minimize fuel consumption and contribute to reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

**Policy 1.10.2:** The City shall develop a Public Education and Information Program to encourage citizens to conserve energy and reduce greenhouse gas.