

# How We Protect Our Environment

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## **GOAL 7A: PROTECT, ENHANCE, AND MAINTAIN THE NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL AMENITIES OF HOLMES COUNTY TO THE HIGHEST QUALITY POSSIBLE**

### **Objective 7.1: Protect Ambient Air Quality.**

**Policy 7.1.1:** Holmes County and the Towns of Esto, Noma, Ponce De Leon, and Westville shall work with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to eliminate unlawful sources of air pollution, as applicable.

**Policy 7.1.2:** New emission sources which have the potential to impact ambient air quality, including the potential to increase the levels of hazardous air pollutants, shall be monitored. Coordination with FDEP and the EPA shall be a standard practice.

**Policy 7.1.3:** Clean air protection shall be fostered by promoting sustainable land development practices. Sustainable practices shall include, but may not be limited to:

- a) Encouraging and educating the importance of grinding vegetative debris to be used as mulch or compost, rather than burning debris which creates fine particle pollution.
- b) To improve air quality, the increased use of green space in site design and planning, and especially along roadways where vehicular modes of transportation are prominent.
- c) Requiring all incineration activities to be conducted in accordance with State and Federal regulations.

**Policy 7.1.4:** Sustainable and efficient transportation practices, such as the promotion of ride-share opportunities within rural areas, shall be supported to mitigate air pollution and excessive personal vehicular travel.

### **Objective 7.2: Provide for the Conservation, Appropriate Use, and Protection of Those Lands Deemed as Environmentally Sensitive, and Reduce the Impacts of Land Development Activities Related to Soil Erosion and Sedimentation.**

**Policy 7.2.1:** The following lands are designated as environmentally sensitive:

- a) Army Corps of Engineers jurisdictional wetlands.
- b) FDEP jurisdictional wetlands.
- c) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designated Special Flood Hazard Areas.
- d) FEMA designated floodplains.
- e) Significant geological features, such as freshwater springs.
- f) Habitat for Threatened or Endangered Species, or Species of Special Concern.
- g) Well-head protection areas, as defined in Policy 7.8.3.

**Policy 7.2.2:** All required Federal and State permits and approvals submitted to the County and the municipalities of Esto, Noma, Ponce De Leon, and Westville in relation to an issued development order must be submitted prior to the commencement of any on-site development, to include land clearing.

## How We Protect Our Environment

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**Policy 7.2.3:** Any issued development order must be found consistent with all required Federal and State permits and approvals prior to any on-site development, to include land clearing. If the development order is not consistent with the Federal or State permit or approval, then the applicant shall apply for an amendment to the approved development order in accordance with local policies and regulations.

**Policy 7.2.4:** The clearing of vegetation, with exception to bona fide agriculture or Silviculture uses, is prohibited prior to issuance of a development order. Exceptions shall include hand clearing of underbrush and removal of trees three (3) inches of diameter or less at a measurement taken fifty-four (54) inches from ground level, and removal of dead, dying, diseased, invasive, or hazardous trees.

**Policy 7.2.5:** Holmes County and the Towns of Esto, Noma, Ponce De Leon, and Westville shall protect native vegetative communities from destruction by development activities through the development order review process, unless such destruction is authorized or required pursuant to an applicable Federal or State permit.

**Policy 7.2.6:** Standards to protect native vegetation may include but are not necessarily limited to: adequate buffer zones and/or site preservation techniques.

**Policy 7.2.7:** Local jurisdictions shall cooperate with adjacent counties and municipalities within the County boundary to conserve, appropriately use, and protect unique vegetative communities. Participation in an intergovernmental coordination committee shall be considered to establish joint management procedures for protection of natural resources.

**Policy 7.2.8:** Holmes County and the municipalities of Esto, Noma, Ponce De Leon, and Westville shall work with the Northwest Florida Water Management District and other appropriate State agencies to promote the removal of non-native invasive species, and reinstate native vegetation within County-owned properties.

**Policy 7.2.9:** Provide maximum protection to those lands classified as “Conservation” on the Future Land Use Map through additional criteria as specified in the Land Development Code.

**Policy 7.2.10:** Holmes County and the municipalities of Esto, Noma, Ponce De Leon, and Westville shall promote the acquisition of appropriate parcels of land through the Florida Communities Trust Florida Forever Program or the Trust for Public Lands, or other programs as may be appropriate, to develop partnerships to protect environmentally sensitive lands, to protect Endangered, Threatened, or Species of Greatest Conservation Need and their habitats, to protect scenic water corridors and their shoreline ecosystems, or provide enhanced public access to outdoor recreational opportunities and open space.

**Policy 7.2.11:** For planning and management purposes, the Holmes County Soil Survey, or the Web Soil Survey, as published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, shall be referenced during the comprehensive planning and land development review process, as applicable.

**Policy 7.2.12:** Land clearing shall only occur with an approved development order or building permit. Land clearing shall adhere to the phasing schedule of the development so as to prevent premature clearing, soil erosion, and sedimentation of land.

## How We Protect Our Environment

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**Policy 7.2.13:** To prevent soil erosion, existing native vegetation shall be retained as practically as possible. This may include measures to reduce vegetative removal of non-planned development areas of the planning site.

**Policy 7.2.14:** Where steep slopes are found adjacent to watercourses, existing vegetation shall be substantially retained to minimize erosion.

**Policy 7.2.15:** All stormwater outfall and irrigation connections, including those associated with agricultural uses, shall be designed to prevent soil erosion and sedimentation.

**Policy 7.2.16:** Silvicultural activities shall follow the Best Management Practices outlined in the publication entitled: Silviculture Best Management Practices Manual, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Forestry.

### **Objective 7.3:** Protect and Manage Mineral Extraction and Mining Activities.

**Policy 7.3.1:** Mining or mineral extraction activities within an environmentally sensitive area, with exception to wetlands or other areas specified in Policy 7.3.5, which cannot be reclaimed shall be prohibited. Such ability for reclamation shall be as determined by the state permitting agency.

**Policy 7.3.2:** Mining and mineral extraction activities shall be conducted in a manner which will minimize adverse effects to water quality, fish, wildlife, and adjacent land uses. Neither mining nor mineral extraction activities shall adversely impact existing residential uses.

**Policy 7.3.3:** Reclamation of lands used for mining or mineral extraction activities shall be in accordance with any issued permit by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Whenever possible, innovative and creative reclamation techniques shall be encouraged to enhance the land for future use.

**Policy 7.3.4:** A compatibility analysis shall be completed and submitted in conjunction with any amendment to the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map to a designation which allows for mining or mineral extraction activities. Criteria to be included in the compatibility analysis shall include, but not be limited to:

- a) Projected impacts to contiguous existing residential dwellings or to lands which allow residential uses, or lands designated as “Recreation” on the Future Land Use Map as a result of generated noise, traffic, light, or dust due to the proposed operation.
- b) Mitigation techniques to be used to off-set the impacts of the mining operation, which can include, but are not be limited to vegetated landscape buffers, setbacks, wall/fences, open space and other factors which enhance the appearance of the mining operation while providing an effective buffer between land uses.
- c) Impacts to public facilities and natural resources.
- d) Need for proposed amendment.
- e) Compatibility to this Comprehensive Plan applicable goals, objective, and policies.

**Policy 7.3.5:** Mining or mineral extraction shall not be permissible in wetlands or adjacent to rivers, streams, creeks and lakes in areas that allow for such activities pursuant to the Future Land Use category.

# How We Protect Our Environment

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The term “adjacent” is defined as an area within forty (40) feet for the purpose of implementing this policy.

## **GOAL 7.B: PROTECT THE QUALITY OF SURFACE AND GROUND WATERS**

**Objective 7.4:** Ensure the Protection and Improvement of Water Quality and Natural Functions of Surface and Gound Water Systems.

**Policy 7.4.1:** Development shall be required to maintain a forty (40) foot minimum natural setback around all FDEP and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers jurisdictional wetlands with exception to utility and transportation networks, and water dependent uses such as docks, piers, boat ramps, platforms, and activities that serve the overriding public interest. In addition, a fifteen (15) foot attendant path may be retained and kept clear for access, so long at no path is within one-hundred feet of another attendant path.

**Policy 7.4.2:** All wetland boundaries shall be depicted on any site plan submitted for review as part of a request for a development order or development permit.

**Policy 7.4.3:** The location of on-site septic tank systems and drainfields shall be prohibited within one-hundred (100) feet of all perennial rivers, streams, creeks, lakes, springs, and wetlands.

**Policy 7.4.4:** The use of enhanced nitrogen reduction septic tank systems may be required in highly environmentally sensitive areas, such as in proximity to an Outstanding Florida Water, impaired waters, freshwater springs, or where lot sizes are at a size where adequate nutrient reduction is not possible to be met at the property boundary.

**Policy 7.4.5:** Any amendment to the Future Land Use Map shall consider the impact to the functionality of adjacent and on-site wetlands and surface waters. The protection and conservation of wetlands and surface waters by the direction of incompatible land uses away from wetlands and surface waters shall occur in combination with other principles, guidelines, standards, and regulations in this Plan and the Land Development Code.

**Policy 7.4.6:** Seawalls shall not be permitted along lakes, rivers, or streams except where no reasonable alternative exists for the development of the upland portion of the parcel.

**Policy 7.4.7:** The Choctawhatchee River is designated as an Outstanding Florida Water by the Florida Administrative Code. This waterbody shall be afforded extra protections in the Land Development Code.

**Policy 7.4.8:** To protect wetlands and surface waters, Holmes County and the Towns of Esto, Noma, Ponce De Leon, and Westville shall, through the development review process, require that post-development run-off rates and pollutant loads do not exceed predevelopment conditions.

**Policy 7.4.9:** As part of the development review process, the maintenance of the quantity and quality of surface water runoff into fresh water bodies, especially freshwater springs, shall be required by prohibiting any development which may diminish or degrade the quality and quantity of surface water runoff within the County through minimum setbacks and/or buffering.

## How We Protect Our Environment

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**Policy 7.4.10:** Development within 100-year floodplains shall be required to maintain the flood-carrying and flood storage capacities of the floodways and flood plains and reduce the risk of property damage and loss of life.

**Policy 7.4.11:** Any filling or grade changes made shall not cause erosion, inhibit the flow of flood waters, or contribute to additional flood heights.

**Policy 7.4.12:** Development shall not occur which will adversely affect aquifer recharge rates in areas designated as “more vulnerable” for contamination potential by the FDEP through its Florida Aquifer Vulnerability Assessment model.

**Policy 7.4.13:** New development activities which involve handling or storing of hazardous materials may be prohibited within areas designated as “more vulnerable” for contamination potential by the FDEP through its Florida Aquifer Vulnerability Assessment model.

**Policy 7.4.14:** The County and the municipalities of Esto, Noma, Ponce De Leon, and Westville shall comply with the resource management plans of the Northwest Florida Water Management District for the emergency conservation of water sources, when applicable.

**Policy 7.4.15:** Promote water reuse and reclamation, where appropriate, for landscape, golf courses, and farm irrigation, and industrial use applications.

**Policy 7.4.16:** Prescribe water wise “Florida Friendly Landscaping” guidelines for new non-residential development, and encourage the same for residential development.

**Policy 7.4.17:** In accordance with the Florida Standard Building Code and the Northwest Florida Water Management District, irrigation rain sensors or soil moisture sensors with automatic cut-offs on all new irrigation systems shall be required.

**Policy 7.4.18:** Procedures to remove or control intrusive submerged, emergent or floating vegetation shall be limited to that necessary to provide reasonable access, and provides the standard of aquatic weed control as defined by the appropriate agencies. Any use of chemical herbicides for such purposes shall ensure that water quality and ecological integrity are not degraded. Restoration of natural aquatic vegetation will be used in conjunction with shoreline restoration in all future conservation and outdoor recreation developments bordering the County’s rivers, streams and lakes.

**Policy 7.4.19:** The disposal of yard or other wastes along shorelines, within surface waters, and in wetlands is prohibited.

**Policy 7.4.20:** The alteration of natural hydrologic character and function of surface waters shall be prohibited, unless permitted by Federal and State agencies to address a health or safety issue.

**Policy 7.4.21:** There shall be no direct or indirect discharge of pollutants to surface waters or ground waters in violation of any water quality standard.

**Policy 7.4.22:** Use of low-quality wetlands for stormwater treatment or for tertiary treatment of wastewater may be allowed only for innovative designs which demonstrate that:

- a) The continued natural functioning of the wetland system will be maintained or improved.

## How We Protect Our Environment

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- b) The natural hydroperiod of the wetland will be maintained.
- c) Water quality, vegetation, and aquatic life forms will be maintained or improved.
- d) All substances that could adversely impact water quality, vegetation and aquatic lifeforms will be removed or treated prior to discharge to the wetland system.
- e) The wetland's ability to assimilate any nutrients in the effluent discharged to the wetland system will not be exceeded.

**Policy 7.4.23:** Within areas of high aquifer recharge, impervious surface areas shall be limited to fifty (50) percent of the total acreage of a parcel for within any land use category.

### **Objective 7.5:** Protect and Maintain Freshwater Springs.

**Policy 7.5.1:** Freshwater springs and other geological karst features shall be identified on development order or development permit applications.

**Policy 7.5.2:** At the time of a request for development approval, freshwater springs and other geological karst features shall be identified and evaluated for their importance to the overall natural resource system.

**Policy 7.5.3:** Due to their importance to the ecology of Holmes County, strategies for protecting freshwater springs and other geological karst features include the following measures:

- a) Principles of additional landscape buffering shall be required within the Land Development Code to protect freshwater springs, including perimeter edge buffering, in order to maintain natural context, edge vegetation, and structural protection.
- b) No development shall occur, with exception to a boardwalk or pier or other means to assist persons with access to the water, within thirty (30) feet of a freshwater spring.
- c) Pretreatment of stormwater runoff shall be required prior to discharging into karst geology features.

### **GOAL 7C: PROTECT ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES**

#### **Objective 7.6:** Consider the Habitat of Endangered and Threatened Species During Development Activities that Cause the Conversion of Land Use.

**Policy 7.6.1:** Endangered and Threatened wildlife and State-designated Threatened species, shall be those as listed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and are published in the "Florida's Endangered and Threatened Species".

**Policy 7.6.2:** Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) are species that are imperiled or at risk of becoming imperiled in the future and shall be those identified by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and are published in the "Florida's State Wildlife Action Plan".

## How We Protect Our Environment

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**Policy 7.6.3:** Holmes County and the municipalities of Esto, Noma, Ponce De Leon, and Westville shall support state and federal requirements for on-site protection and/or managed relocation for all species listed and identified as Endangered or Threatened, and conservation management of critical habitats.

**Policy 7.6.4:** Endangered and Threatened Species shall be protected by requiring an analysis from State of Florida and Federal resources that lists any Endangered or Threatened Species which are located or noted to be considered in the vicinity of the subject parcel. This analysis must be submitted in conjunction with any Comprehensive Plan Map amendment request to a more dense or intense category. Such assessment may be conducted with readily available information through desktop GIS data and/or the most recent state agency published documentation.

**Policy 7.6.5:** Any developer of land shall be required to minimize the effects of development on significant plant and wildlife habitat. This shall be accomplished through:

- a) The preservation of habitat, as determined through the development review process and pursuant to Land Development Code regulations, which is selected based on the quality and viability of the habitat.
- b) The preservation of habitat which is located in areas determined as functional by the threatened or endangered species.
- c) The acceptance of alternatives to onsite conservation and/or preservation measures that provide for the long-term protection and management of endangered or threatened plant and wildlife species that otherwise would not have been preserved.

**Policy 7.6.6:** Holmes County shall develop incentives designed to encourage private land owners to manage land holdings for wildlife which are listed as threatened or endangered.

### GOAL 7D. REDUCE RISK OF HAZARDOUS MATERIALS AND TOXIC SUBSTANCES

**Objective 7.7:** Minimize Human and Environmental Exposure to Hazardous Waste, Toxic Substances and Contaminated Sites.

**Policy 7.7.1:** The County and the municipalities of Esto, Noma, Ponce De Leon, and Westville shall apply for available state and federal funds for the establishment of hazardous waste storage/transfer facilities, as the need arises.

**Policy 7.7.2:** The County and the municipalities of Esto, Noma, Ponce De Leon, and Westville, as part of the development review process, shall require that all hazardous waste or toxic substance generators submit a hazardous waste management plan to the Planning Official, or designee.

**Policy 7.7.3:** The County and the municipalities of Esto, Noma, Ponce De Leon, and Westville shall coordinate with the municipalities through any means necessary in management programs for proper storage, recycling, collection and disposal of hazardous wastes and toxic substances.

**Policy 7.7.4:** As applicable, to the fullest extent possible, Holmes County and the municipalities of Esto, Noma, Ponce De Leon, and Westville shall work toward receiving funding through the Environmental



## How We Protect Our Environment

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Protection Agency Brownfield Assessment Grant Program to inventory, characterize, assess and conduct planning and community involvement related to Brownfield sites.

**Policy 7.7.5:** As applicable, the County and the municipalities of Esto, Noma, Ponce De Leon, and Westville shall work with appropriate agencies to expand the County's involvement with the Federal and State Brownfields programs and grants.

**Policy 7.7.6:** Abandoned installations or facilities which contained hazardous waste, toxic substances, or other contaminants shall be properly disposed of by the property owner at the time of abandonment. Abandoned underground storage tanks shall be removed, unless removal would threaten the structural integrity of a nearby building or other structure.

**Policy 7.7.7:** In order to minimize the impact of landfills on the environment and the public health of residents, in areas of Holmes County shown as "more vulnerable" of contamination potential by the FDEP through its Florida Aquifer Vulnerability Assessment model, demolition debris landfills shall have additional location and operational criteria listed in the Land Development Code.

### GOAL 7E: PROVIDE FOR SAFE POTABLE WATER

**Objective 7.8:** Provide for Well Head Protection.

**Policy 7.8.1:** By 2027, the County shall pursue the establishment of interlocal agreements or joint planning agreements to ensure the protection of well heads protection zones with any municipality that may have jurisdiction within said zone(s).

**Policy 7.8.2:** Ensure protection for all community water supply wells by coordinating with the Northwest Florida Water Management District to protect well field protection zones.

**Policy 7.8.3:** A Well Head Protection Area is considered a radius of five-hundred (500) feet from any well head utilized for public potable water consumption. Within this area the storage of hazardous materials or toxic waste, any landfill, storage of agricultural chemicals, fuel tanks, any use that has the potential to contaminate groundwater, or any commercial animal facility to include grazing pasture is prohibited.

**Policy 7.8.4:** A radius of two-hundred (200) feet from any well head utilized for public potable water consumption is established as an area that prohibits any use other than single-family residential, recreation, or open spaces uses. No impervious surface is allowed within this radius except that which is attributed to a single-family use.

### GOAL 7F: PROTECT CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL RESOURCES

**Objective 7.9:** Maintain a Development Review Process to Promote Protection of Cultural and Historical Resources.

**Policy 7.9.1:** The County shall continually update its files with all historic resources within the unincorporated areas as listed by the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources.



# How We Protect Our Environment

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**Policy 7.9.2:** The County and the municipalities of Esto, Noma, Ponce De Leon, and Westville will use the State of Florida Master Site File to identify those areas where cultural, archaeological or historic resources may exist.

**Policy 7.9.3:** Developers of property which contain a resource listed on the Florida Master Site File must demonstrate that no listed resource shall be adversely impacted due to the development of any parcel.

## **GOAL 7G: PRESERVE PUBLIC OPEN SPACE AND SCENIC VIEWSHEDS**

### **Objective 7.10: Protect and Preserve Open Space for Public Use.**

**Policy 7.10.1:** Open space shall be provided on at least twenty (20) percent of every newly requested non-residential development, and at minimum within twenty (20) percent of each platted subdivision. Uses exempt from this requirement include:

- a) Communication towers, major utilities including energy, wastewater and potable water facilities, and outdoor recreation facilities.

**Policy 7.10.2:** To the greatest extent possible, open space shall be designed to connect to adjacent parcels to allow greater accessibility to wildlife, provide space for community spaces, and promote resource protection.

**Policy 7.10.3:** Rural subdivisions exceeding five acres per dwelling unit in size are exempt from Policy 7.10.2.

**Policy 7.10.4:** Infrastructure and utility structures, such as communication towers, personal wireless service facilities, radio and television antennas, water and sewer, and energy generation facilities shall be designed and located to minimize adverse visual impacts on the landscape, especially as seen from a public right-of-way.

**Policy 7.10.5:** All forms of outdoor advertising shall be designed and located to minimize adverse impacts on the visual quality of the natural environment.

**Policy 7.10.6:** Adverse impacts of outdoor lighting shall be minimized in order to preserve the ambiance and quality of the nighttime sky and reduce energy consumption while allowing for public safety and security.

- a) The following conservation principles shall be required:
  - i. Minimize offsite lighting impacts, including glare, light trespass, and light pollution.
  - ii. Use lighting at the appropriate intensity, direction, and times, to ensure light is not overused or impacting areas where it is not intended.
  - iii. Maximize energy and cost efficiency.

## *How We Protect Our Environment*

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- b) The County and the municipalities of Esto, Noma, Ponce De Leon, and Westville shall adopt land development regulations for a comprehensive set of outdoor lighting design standards based on conservation principles.
- c) Land development regulations shall address the outdoor lighting of roadways, parking lots, advertisements, commercial, industrial, and recreational activities.
- d) The County shall seek the involvement of all of the local municipalities.