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## CONSERVATION ELEMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

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**Goal 6.1:** The natural resources of St. Lucie County shall be protected, appropriately used, or conserved in a manner which maximizes their functions, and values.

**Objective 6.1.1:** Air quality within St. Lucie County shall meet or surpass National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for all pollutants measured by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP).

**Policy 6.1.1.1** - Annually review existing air quality reports and confer with the FDEP on the source(s) of air quality violations and the proper abatement methods. If needed, coordinate with the FDEP in their efforts to enforce clean air standards.

**Policy 6.1.1.2** - St. Lucie County shall facilitate development that maximizes energy efficiency and sustainability. This shall include implementing Land Development Code standards that promote the types of land use patterns and development techniques that will reduce the total fossil fuel energy required to build and maintain urban land uses. This shall include standards that promote mixed land use patterns, urban infill, public transit and provide non-motorized interconnections between land use types to reduce auto dependence and vehicle miles traveled.

**Policy 6.1.1.3** - Land Development Code shall incorporate performance standards which combat erosion and generation of fugitive dust particles. At a minimum, construction practices including but not limited to seeding, wetting, and mulching which minimize airborne dust and particulate emission generated by construction activities shall be undertaken within five working days of completion of clearing work.

**Policy 6.1.1.4** - The County shall continue to support, seek additional funding sources for, and implement the Greenways and Trails Master Plan to facilitate and encourage alternative transportation means.

**Policy 6.1.1.5** - The County shall continue to review implementable measures that would effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and as financially feasible, enact effective measure to reduce emissions generated by County government operations and by policies effecting community-wide functions.

**Objective 6.1.2** - The County shall continue to enforce Land Development Code provisions which require the conservation, appropriate use, and protection of surface waters.

**Policy 6.1.2.1** - The County's Land Development Code shall address comprehensive stormwater management including the following:

- a. The use of stormwater detention and/or retention;
- b. Stream bank and shoreline buffer zones;
- c. General design and construction standards for on-site stormwater management;
- d. Best Management Practices for urban and agricultural development; and
- e. Standards for new discharges to Outstanding Florida Waters.

**Policy 6.1.2.2** - St. Lucie County shall continue to implement stormwater improvement projects consistent with the Stormwater Management Plan and apply for state and federal funding programs to supplement local programs in the implementation and construction of stormwater management projects.

**Policy 6.1.2.3** - St. Lucie County shall evaluate the use of the following mosquito control techniques during the development of the new stormwater regulations:

- a. Maintenance of any required littoral areas and upland buffers;
- b. A one-foot or other appropriate buffer between the bottom of stormwater ponds and the water table; and
- c. Fish ponds for use during low water periods.

**Policy 6.1.2.4** - St. Lucie County shall support the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Plan, the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), the CERP IRL – South Projects, the IRL National Estuary Program Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan, and any other state, federal or regional projects designed to achieve reductions of direct run-off and stormwater pollutants to the surface waters within the County, as well as conservation of water resources.

**Policy 6.1.2.5** The County shall continue to enforce the Land Development Code requiring a vegetated and functional littoral zone to be established as part of the surface water management system of upland water bodies occurring on development sites.

**Policy 6.1.2.6** - St. Lucie County shall encourage the preservation of natural scenic views of natural waterways through the site plan review process.

**Policy 6.1.2.7** - The County shall not support the reclassification of any surface water body within County boundaries to acknowledge lower water-quality conditions unless necessary to protect public health, safety, or welfare. The County shall support any effort to reclassify surface water bodies to accommodate higher standards.

**Policy 6.1.2.8** - The County shall take an active role in supporting the development of appropriate attenuation facilities and ecosystem restoration projects in the County in order to eliminate pollutant flows into the Indian River Lagoon National Estuary and the St. Lucie River.

**Policy 6.1.2.9** - St. Lucie County shall restrict the construction of artificial waterways (canals) which provide access to any of the rivers, streams, creeks, canals, or other waters of the State or their tributary systems for the purposes of navigation, aesthetics, recreation, and or enhancement of property.

**Policy 6.1.2.10** - The County shall maintain, and improve, surface water quality within St. Lucie County according to South Florida Water Management and Florida Department of Environmental Protection regulations and standards.

**Policy 6.1.2.11** - St. Lucie County shall support and assist with projects that further the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Initiative goals to restore and maintain ecosystem elements most resembling natural, healthy functions of a complex balanced aquatic system.

**Policy 6.1.2.12** - The County shall support FDEP in monitoring activities in the Port of Ft. Pierce to ensure Best Management Practices (BMP) are implemented to avoid negative impacts to the lagoon and ocean water habitats.

**Policy 6.1.2.13** - The County shall support the reconnection of impounded wetlands to the Indian River Lagoon to improve the productivity of estuaries; and the implementation of adaptive management strategies for saltwater marshes and mangrove systems which are consistent with Best Management Practices for mosquito control.

**Policy 6.1.2.14** - Ensure that surface water management systems be designed and operated consistent with state, federal and regional standards, and the County's adopted Level of Service Standard.

**Policy 6.1.2.15** - No new untreated point source discharges into estuarine and coastal waters, for stormwater runoff, will be permitted.

**Objective 6.1.3:** The County shall continue to enforce Land Development Code provisions which require the protection and maintenance of the natural functions (flow and storage) of the 100-year floodplain.

**Policy 6.1.3.1** - The County's Land Development Code shall include the use of programs to protect or maintain floodplain, such as reduced parking, conservation easements, cluster site planning and micro-siting of buildings. The County shall continue to strictly enforce regulations that direct development away from floodplains and provide upland buffers along the floodplain.

**Policy 6.1.3.2** - The County shall continue to protect and acquire floodplain through the Environmentally Significant Lands Program, cooperative agreements with state and federal acquisition programs, and the recordation of conservation easements.

**Policy 6.1.3.3** - Floodplain management initiatives for unincorporated areas which may impact or be beneficial to other jurisdictional areas within the watersheds shall be coordinated and developed in cooperation with all other affected jurisdictional entities.

**Objective 6.1.4:** The County shall continue to enforce Wetland Protection Standards within the Land Development Code which require the preservation, creation and restoration of wetlands in a manner that results in no net loss of function and value within the County's jurisdiction.

**Policy 6.1.4.1** - The Land Development Code shall require the following information on site plans for new development:

- a. The location and extent of wetlands located on the property;
- b. Measures to assure that normal flows and quality of water will be provided to maintain wetlands after development; and
- c. Measures to mitigate for any unavoidable wetland impacts proposed as part of the development.

**Policy 6.1.4.2** - The Land Development Code shall provide criteria for:

- a. Project modification measures to reduce wetland loss and degradation. All projects shall be required to maximize design modifications to ensure wetland impacts are avoided or minimized to the maximum extent feasible;

- b. The evaluation of proposed wetland alteration for permitted uses;
- c. The mitigation of wetlands alteration which include, but are not limited to, the restoration of disturbed wetlands, creation of additional wetlands, or enhancement of functions and values provided by existing habitats.

**Policy 6.1.4.3** - The County Land Development Regulations shall continue to require a minimum 50-foot buffer zone of native upland and transitional vegetation along rivers, creeks, and estuaries, to be maintained from the landward extent of state waters or from Mean High Water of the rivers, creeks, and estuaries; whichever is greater.

**Policy 6.1.4.4** - The land development regulations shall require on all new development sites, the installation or preservation of a native vegetative buffer adjacent to all wetlands, submerged lands, or other surface waters, regardless of whether these be naturally occurring or manmade.

**Policy 6.1.4.5** - The County shall through the development review process and in cooperation with and coordination with the appropriate wetland and regulatory agencies, continue to conserve and protect wetlands from detrimental physical and hydrological alteration. The regulation of activities in, on or over wetlands or other surface waters and the management and storage of all surface waters shall be pursuant to applicable local, state and Federal requirements. All development will be directed away from wetlands through enforcing the most restrictive of these requirements.

The County standards shall, at a minimum, include the protection of wetlands in accordance with wetland classifications identified under Objective 6.1.14 of the Conservation Element.

**Policy 6.1.4.6** - The Land Development Code shall include the use of programs to protect or maintain wetlands, such as reduced paving, conservation easements, cluster site planning and micro-siting of buildings.

**Policy 6.1.4.7** - The County shall provide appropriate administrative support in the acquisition of additional wetlands and uplands as part of the Savannas Preserve State Park.

**Policy 6.1.4.8** - The County shall support wetland mitigation programs by federal and state agencies that will not weaken local regulatory authority and will ensure no net loss of wetland function and provide for a measured increase in restored wetland function.

**Policy 6.1.4.9** - The County shall continue to identify and inventory wetlands, and analyze wetland areas for those which could be considered high quality wetlands of high functional value. The County shall provide for the protection, appropriate use and conservation of these areas based on criteria which consider the administrative and fiscal constraints of the County. Potential mechanisms shall include acquisition, restriction or prohibition of activities, and incentives to protect and maintain wetlands.

**Policy 6.1.4.10** - Any wetland impact occurring within St. Lucie County shall be mitigated within the corresponding watershed, unless waived by the Board of County Commissioners.

**Policy 6.1.4.11** - The County shall require that setback requirements from jurisdictional

wetlands are maintained by continued implementation of the Land Development Code.

**Policy 6.1.4.12** - Protection of wetlands and other surface waters is preferred to destruction and mitigation due to the temporal loss of ecological value and uncertainty regarding the ability to recreate certain functions associated with these features. Mitigation will be considered only after the applicant has complied with the Land Development Code requirements regarding the avoidance and minimization of wetland impacts.

**Policy 6.1.4.13** - All wetlands and adjacent buffers preserved on the development site shall be protected by a conservation easement that is dedicated to a government agency or other entity acceptable to the Board of County Commissioners. The conservation easement shall provide for the protection and perpetual maintenance of the wetland and buffer. The proposed preservation area shall be designated on all site plans and application materials.

**Policy 6.1.4.14** - When it is determined that a wetland violation has occurred, restoration of the affected wetland shall be required and no permits for the development shall be issued, until the required restoration is completed. When it is determined that a wetland violation has occurred, restoration shall be required before any development permits are issued, or within 90 days, whichever occurs first.

**Policy 6.1.4.15** - All development applications that include wetland habitat shall be consistent with all applicable Federal, State and County regulations and the goals, objectives and policies of the County's Comprehensive Plan. The most restrictive of these regulations shall be enforced.

**Objective 6.1.5:** The County shall continue to enforce the Land Development Code which requires the conservation, appropriate use, and protection of the quality and quantity of groundwater.

**Policy 6.1.5.1** - St. Lucie County shall enforce the Wellfield Protection program standards, including:

- a. Assure adequate and safe water supplies to present and future citizens of the County;
- b. Comply with Federal and State regulations in the best interests of the County and its future growth and development;
- c. Avoid crisis water supply situations through careful groundwater resources planning and conservation;
- d. Identify and protect the functions of public wellfield areas, including recharge of those areas, and provide incentives to keep the present and future public wellfields compatible with the needs expressed in a. above;
- e. Ensure that new development is compatible with existing local and regional water supply capabilities; and
- f. Protect present and future public wellfields against depletion and contamination through appropriate regulation, incentives, and cooperative agreements.

**Policy 6.1.5.2** - St. Lucie County shall cooperate with Federal, State, and local agencies in monitoring groundwater levels and quality.

**Policy 6.1.5.3** - Activities and land uses known to adversely affect the quality and quantity of water sources and natural groundwater recharge areas shall be regulated to protect the quality and quantity of these resources.

**Policy 6.1.5.4** - St. Lucie County shall continue to cooperate with SFWMD to properly seal unpermitted active drainage wells and abandoned free-flowing artesian wells.

**Policy 6.1.5.5** - The County shall continue to identify existing and potential threats to the quality of waters within the Wellfield Protection Areas.

**Policy 6.1.5.6** - The County shall provide for open space as a part of the requirements for all development and redevelopment to promote shallow water aquifer recharge and stormwater filtration.

**Policy 6.1.5.7** - The County shall protect groundwater by prohibiting the use of any land within unincorporated County for "High-Intensity Petroleum Operations." High-Intensity Petroleum Operations include, well stimulation treatments and secondary and enhanced recovery operations such as hydraulic fracturing, cyclic steam injection, waterflood or steamflood injection and acid well stimulation treatments.

**Objective 6.1.6:** The County shall protect and conserve the natural functions of soils which includes, at a minimum, the following policies and regulations.

**Policy 6.1.6.1** - The County shall require through the Land Development Code the consideration of hydrologic, topographic, and vegetative cover factors in the site plan review process of proposed developments.

**Policy 6.1.6.2** - The Land Development Code shall include regulations to protect environmentally sensitive lands relating to destructive activities and uses such as off road vehicle use.

**Policy 6.1.6.3** - Assist the St. Lucie County Soil and Water Conservation District in those activities directed at minimizing soil erosion.

**Policy 6.1.6.4** - The County shall coordinate with other agencies and organizations which have initiated data collection programs to acquire water quality and turbidity information as it relates to soil erosion.

**Policy 6.1.6.5** - Clearing of native vegetation on newly platted subdivision lots prior to the issuance of a building permit for construction on the single family lot shall be limited to that which is necessary for roads, utilities installation and drainage.

**Policy 6.1.6.6** - Require new development activities to be consistent with the soil conditions in the area in which the activity is proposed. In those instances where soil modifications are necessary, all activities should utilize best management practices as identified by the Soil Conservation Service.

**Objective 6.1.7:** The County shall continue to regulate mining to ensure the conservation, appropriate use, and protection of minerals in a manner that safeguards all of the County's remaining natural resources, including ground and surface waters and upland plant communities.

**Policy 6.1.7.1** - The Land Development Code shall include criteria developed as a result of a continuing monitoring and evaluation program of the County's drainage systems, wetlands, and other surface waters. Mechanisms to maintain the functioning of drainage systems, wetlands, and surface waters that existed prior to resource extraction shall be developed.

**Policy 6.1.7.2** - The Land Development Code shall include locally determined criteria for buffers which address sight, sound, and airborne particulate matter between resource extraction activities and adjacent existing and future land uses. The airborne particulate matter criteria shall also address trucking operations access points to be utilized as part of the mining operation.

**Policy 6.1.7.3** - The Land Development Code shall include locally determined criteria which specifies suitable conditions for reclamation. These criteria shall address the potential for land forms capable of supporting diverse and beneficial land uses, time limits on implementation of reclamation, revegetation to minimize wildlife habitat lost, and shoreline treatments for water bodies which address appropriate safety and environmental considerations.

**Policy 6.1.7.4** - The Land Development Code shall encourage the use of recycled materials for roadway construction, where practicable.

**Policy 6.1.7.5** –The County shall continue to implement the Land Development Code and prohibit mining in the following environmentally sensitive areas:

- a. The North and South Savannas;
- b. Atlantic Coastal Ridge;
- c. Within any identified environmentally sensitive area or within 200 feet of such an area;
- d. Coastal High Hazard Area;
- e. Hutchinson Island; or
- f. Environmentally sensitive areas as defined in this element, except within Category III wetlands that have been determined by the jurisdictional State agency to be “poor” or “fair” quality; and
- g. Any area designated as a Category I or Category II wetland in this element.

**Policy 6.1.7.6** - Enforce the County's Land Development Code which requires a reclamation/restoration plan be submitted as part of the required application for an extractive use permit.

**Objective 6.1.8:** The County shall protect native upland vegetative communities, and shall protect listed species and their habitat. This shall be accomplished through the County Environmentally Significant Lands Acquisition program, ongoing natural resource protection programs and the implementation of Land Development Code.

**Policy 6.1.8.1** - The County shall require all nuisance and invasive exotic vegetation (e.g. Brazilian pepper, Australian pine and Melaleuca) be removed and eradicated at the time of development and, where appropriate, replaced with native species that are adapted to existing soil and climatic conditions.

**Policy 6.1.8.2** - The County shall protect state and federal listed plant and animal

populations and their native habitat, including intact canopy, understory and ground cover upon which these populations depend for survival. Protection mechanisms include:

- a. Assisting in the application of and compliance with Federal and State regulations;
- b. Consulting with appropriate Federal and State agencies during development reviews when listed species may be onsite;
- c. Establishing management programs with incentives for private landowners to protect or conserve habitats, such as reduced parking, landscaping, or credit for park and recreation impact fees;
- d. Using guidelines in the Land Development Code regarding conservation easements, cluster site planning and micro-siting of buildings;
- e. Assisting the state in developing an education program to promote the preservation of endangered and threatened species; and
- f. Proposed site clearing activities within the known range of listed species or where such species are expected to occur based upon habitat suitability and species ranges shall be surveyed by qualified environmental consultants and/or government ecologists prior to approval and commencement of such activities to determine whether or not populations of listed plant and animal species occur.

**Policy 6.1.8.3** - Lands acquired through the County's Environmentally Significant Lands Program for preservation shall be preserved and managed for natural habitat, listed plant and animal species and passive resource recreational needs of the public.

**Policy 6.1.8.4** - The Land Development Code shall include criteria which allow utilization of Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) or other flexible methods of land development transfer that would direct development from unsuitable lands to those most suitable for active use.

**Policy 6.1.8.5** - All lands within development sites proposed as conservation and open space areas shall be maintained by one or more legal entities approved by the County Attorney that will be responsible for the perpetual maintenance of the conservation or open space area.

**Policy 6.1.8.6** - The County shall require the use of native vegetation adapted to existing soil and climatic conditions in landscaping.

**Policy 6.1.8.7** - St. Lucie County shall review as part of each Evaluation and Appraisal Report of the Comprehensive Plan the existing criteria and standards for the protection of the remaining native plant communities within the County as identified by the Florida Natural Area Inventory. For the purpose of this plan, native plant communities shall include intact ground cover, understory and canopy layers where applicable.

**Policy 6.1.8.8** - St. Lucie County shall require the submission of an environmental impact report, which addresses concerns for habitat preservation and species protection for projects on parcels greater than ten acres, or that are located on the barrier island, the Atlantic Coastal Ridge, are adjacent to public conservation lands, or are otherwise considered Environmentally Sensitive Areas as defined in this Element. The County may provide a process for the consideration of a waiver of this requirement, subject to meeting standards as may be described in the County's Land Development Code.



**Policy 6.1.8.9** - The County shall continue to identify native upland vegetative communities. The County shall provide for the protection, appropriate use and conservation of these areas based on criteria which consider the administrative and fiscal constraints of the County. Potential mechanisms shall include acquisition, conservation easements, restriction or prohibition of activities, and incentives to protect and maintain these areas.

**Policy 6.1.8.10** - Land use decisions shall consider the effects of development impacts on fish, wildlife and habitat and the cumulative impact of development and redevelopment upon wildlife habitat. If habitat is preserved as part of a development approval, a Preserve Area Monitoring and Management Plan (PAMMP) shall be provided by the applicant, and approved by the County prior to initiation of development. The management plan shall detail the schedule and management methods used to maintain or improve the habitat, the funding mechanism to properly implement the plan over the required period of time, and shall follow the state and federal agency recommendations for managing wildlife species and habitat. In addition, this policy shall apply to any species or native habitat the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council determines to be regionally rare, endangered or threatened with extinction. To ensure adequate protection, protected plants and animals, which cannot be provided with sufficient undisturbed habitat to maintain the existing population in a healthy, viable state on site, shall be effectively relocated in accordance with local, state and federal regulations and accepted best management practices.

**Policy 6.1.8.11** - The County shall continue to support the County Land Acquisition Selection Committee whose function is to utilize the 2004 St. Lucie County Native Habitat Inventory and Federal, State, and local resources, to formulate a master acquisition list of lands having native upland habitat. The overall objective is to ensure the preservation of a minimum of 12,500 acres of the remaining native upland habitat, with the highest priority being those classified as endangered or threatened as well as those properties having habitats that are facing destruction as a result of urban development and which recognizes relationships to those areas of native habitat already under public and/or private preservation.

**Policy 6.1.8.12** - The Land Development Code shall provide that existing on-site native upland habitat be incorporated into required site plans as a part of open space areas, as required landscaping or as a part of minimum yard areas so that as much of the identified habitat as is practicable is maintained.

**Policy 6.1.8.13** - The County shall require clustering, micro-siting of structures or other protective mechanisms to preserve native vegetative communities or protected species habitats.

**Policy 6.1.8.14** - The County shall continue to allow fees in lieu of on-site preservation of upland native plant communities. Considerations, at a minimum, shall include the practicality of on-site preservation, the size and quality of the impacted community and the quality and distance to any surrounding vegetative community. Any fees collected shall be for the purpose of habitat acquisition/preservation and enhancement that would be more environmentally beneficial and provide a net increase in area of habitat quality.

**Policy 6.1.8.15** - St. Lucie County shall continue to enforce standards for the protection and preservation of native upland vegetative communities as described by the Florida

Natural Areas Inventory. The criteria shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- a. Size of the property on which the development activity is to take place;
- b. The type, quality and sensitivity of the native habitat including utilization by native and listed wildlife;
- c. Methodologies to be employed in protecting and preserving habitat and diversity;
- d. The presence or occurrence of listed species on-site;
- e. The size and quality of similar habitat adjacent or in close proximity;
- f. Provisions for clustering, micro-siting, density transfers or other mechanisms to avoid or minimize impacts; and
- g. Mitigation measures designed to avoid a loss of habitat.

**Objective 6.1.9** - The County shall develop a hazardous waste management program for the proper recycling, storage, collection, and disposal or transfer of hazardous materials and wastes.

**Policy 6.1.9.1** - The County shall continue to provide a transfer facility for household and small quantity generators of hazardous wastes.

**Policy 6.1.9.2** - The County shall develop emergency response plans to handle accidents involving hazardous materials or wastes.

**Policy 6.1.9.3** - The County shall continue the recycling program which includes public education on the beneficial use of hazardous wastes.

**Policy 6.1.9.4** - The County shall continue to support State-sponsored Amnesty Days to collect hazardous wastes in the County; and shall evaluate the need for scheduling local Amnesty Days.

**Policy 6.1.9.5** - The County shall implement an employee training program to properly identify and inspect wastes before they enter the landfill and implement an inspection or screening program to exclude hazardous items such as drums, tanks from unknown sources, waste pesticides, or chemicals from spill cleanups.

**Policy 6.1.9.6** - The County shall participate with the FDEP and other local governments in the region to develop a regional hazardous waste transfer and storage facility and collection network, if appropriate.

**Policy 6.1.9.7** - The County shall seek funding from FDEP's Local Hazardous Waste Collection Grants Program to manage hazardous wastes.

**Policy 6.1.9.8** - The County shall utilize the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Storage Tank Facility Database to assess Countywide underground storage tanks and assist any owner in seeking funding to respond to any groundwater contamination resulting from leaking tanks.

**Policy 6.1.9.9** - The County shall continue a public education program regarding household hazardous wastes, the proper methods of their disposal and alternative nonhazardous substitutes in cooperation with schools, news media, and civic organizations, and in conjunction with Amnesty Day awareness programs.

**Objective 6.1.10:** The County Land Development Code shall require the conservation, appropriate use and protection of current and projected potable water sources.

**Policy 6.1.10.1** - The County shall cooperate with the South Florida Water Management District to conserve water resources in emergencies and during declared water shortages.

**Policy 6.1.10.2** - The County shall coordinate with the FDEP, the SFWMD, local municipalities and other appropriate agencies in alternative water supply planning efforts.

**Policy 6.1.10.3** - The County shall implement a public education program regarding various methods of water conservation at the household and small business level.

**Policy 6.1.10.4** - The County shall coordinate with the SFWMD in the development and updates of the Regional Water Supply Plan.

**Policy 6.1.10.5** - St. Lucie County shall continue to coordinate with the SFWMD and other appropriate agencies to identify potable water supply areas. Identified areas shall be protected through adoption of lands development regulations.

**Objective 6.1.11:** St. Lucie County shall promote the protection of natural buffer areas to lessen the adverse effects which adjacent developments might have on managed conservation areas, such as the Savannas State Preserve, Fort Pierce Inlet State Park, and lands purchased for preservation purposes through Federal, State and local land acquisition programs.

**Policy 6.1.11.1** - St. Lucie County shall cooperate with the FDEP and other applicable agencies in their management programs that provide for the protection of native habitats within the County.

**Policy 6.1.11.2** - The County shall enforce all landscape regulations to ensure the installation and preservation of all required landscape buffers.

**Policy 6.1.11.3** - Proposed land use activities adjacent to public natural area conservation and recreation lands, shall be limited to activities that will not degrade the natural physical, biological, aesthetic, or recreational functions of such lands.

**Policy 6.1.11.4** - Land development applications shall identify public and semipublic conservation and recreation lands on or adjacent to the development site.

**Policy 6.1.11.5** - The County shall continually evaluate the landscape and buffer standards in the Land Development Code and update any portion of the standards that do not adequately protect the County's natural resources.

**Objective 6.1.12:** The biodiversity of the County's natural areas shall be protected and enhanced through public land acquisition, conservation easements, the Land Development Code regulations, and implementation of Management Plans prepared for public owned and managed natural areas. The County shall enact, enforce, and continually review and update land use regulations and land management plans that provide for the protection of natural

resources.

**Policy 6.1.12.1** - The County shall continually evaluate the Resource Protection Standards section of the Land Development Code and update any portion of the standards that do not adequately protect the County's natural resources.

**Policy 6.1.12.2** - All appropriate Land Development Code regulations required by this Comprehensive Plan shall include the protection of environmentally sensitive upland and wetland areas.

**Policy 6.1.12.3** - The County shall acquire and support the public acquisition of a diversity of natural habitat types to ensure maximum diversity of native wildlife species. The County shall continue to support the functions and recommendations of the County Land Acquisition Selection Committee.

**Policy 6.1.12.4** - Imperiled and Critically Imperiled vegetative communities, as defined by the Florida Natural Areas Inventory, including but not limited to scrub, maritime hammock, or coastal dune; wetlands, the North and South Savannas, North and South Hutchinson Island and the Atlantic Coastal Ridge shall be considered Environmentally Sensitive Areas for conservation, appropriate use, and protection to further the goals, objectives, and policies of this Element and the County Land Development Code. Development proposals within these areas shall adhere to the following conditions:

- a. Proposed development projects within a defined Environmentally Sensitive Area, as identified above, must submit as part of a development approval process an Environmental Impact Report. The report shall contain:
  1. An inventory of existing vegetation and wildlife based on a field survey;
  2. An identification of wildlife or vegetation present that is listed for protection by the state or federal government;
  3. An assessment of the land that will identify the location of all environmentally sensitive habitat or vegetation and will contain a plan to protect the resource;
  4. An analysis of the functional viability and quality of the various habitats;
  5. A discussion of the impacts, both positive and adverse, on the resources;
  6. A discussion of how the proposed development plan maximizes efforts to avoid and minimize adverse impacts to the environment;
  7. A discussion concerning whether there is any potential for irreplaceable or irretrievable environmental damage; and
  8. If reasonable use of the property cannot occur without adversely impacting on-site natural resources, a mitigation plan shall be required that describes actions to be taken that replace those functions and values of the resource as a result of impacting the resource.
- b. Those Environmentally Sensitive Areas identified as containing habitat worthy of preservation may require a clustering of allowable density to more suitable areas for development to avoid and minimize impacts to highly sensitive habitat.
- c. Environmentally Sensitive Areas containing highly sensitive native habitat worthy of preservation may require the habitat be protected through a conservation easement or other method acceptable to the County as defined in the Land Development Code. Only footpaths or entryways will be permitted in such areas.

**Policy 6.1.12.5** - Environmental Impact Reports required by this Plan shall be conducted by qualified environmental professionals.

**Policy 6.1.12.6** - Where feasible, the County shall protect critical habitat through acquisition, establishment of public or private conservation easements, purchase of development rights, or through other available means as deemed appropriate. The County shall continue to request assistance in public acquisition of natural areas under federal, state and regional programs or other non-governmental organizations.

**Policy 6.1.12.7** - The County shall consider the abundance, status, and distribution of endangered ecosystems and other environmentally sensitive lands when reviewing land use proposals and acquisitions.

**Policy 6.1.12.8** - All native upland and wetland habitats, including those located within Environmentally Sensitive Areas as defined in this Element, that are required to be preserved as part of a development project shall be protected through a conservation easement or other method acceptable to the County. The proposed preservation areas shall be designated on all site plan and permit application materials.

**Policy 6.1.12.9** - St. Lucie County shall support nature based eco-tourism activities on public preserves that are primarily designed for appreciation of the County's native habitats and wildlife species that can be accomplished in a manner that does not disrupt wildlife or negatively impact their habitat. The type of recreational activity deemed appropriate for the County's public preserves will depend on the type of native vegetative community on the site. This includes, but is not limited to, hiking, wilderness camping, canoeing, swimming, and wildlife viewing. Activities centers, including, educational centers, museums, and botanical centers will be provided at suitable locations throughout the County. All eco-tourism facilities shall be operated in a manner that does not degrade or reduce the inherent natural functions and values of the natural resources utilized for the eco-tourism use. County owned or managed lands purchased through public land acquisition programs targeting the protection of the natural resources shall only provide access and recreational opportunities that can be provided without degradation of the native plant communities and listed plant and animal species values.

**Policy 6.1.12.10** - Lands purchased through the County's Environmentally Significant Lands program shall be monitored for visitor impacts which threaten natural areas. If impacts to natural areas are identified a plan shall be prepared to mitigate or eliminate the negative impacts.

**Policy 6.1.12.11** - The County shall provide multiple-use opportunities on County-owned natural preserve areas, consistent with natural resource protection and conservation, to provide for passive recreation, wildlife habitat, watershed protection, erosion control, maintenance or enhancement of water quality, aquifer recharge protection, or other such functions.

**Policy 6.1.12.12** - The County shall continue to monitor all credible climate change and sea level rise data and what direct and potential effects this has on natural resources. Based on this data the County shall evaluate and update the resource protection standards of the Land Development Code and this plan as necessary.

**Policy 6.1.12.13** - To ensure protection of the natural resources of the County, as identified in Section 163.3177(6)d), Florida Statutes, and as protected in this Conservation Element, the County shall direct all future land uses that are not

compatible with these natural resources away from these natural resources. For this purpose, the determination of “compatibility” shall be made based upon the definition of that term in Section 163.3164, Florida Statutes. The type, intensity or density, extent, distribution, and location of allowable land uses and the types, values, functions, sizes, conditions, and location of natural resources are land use factors that shall be considered when directing incompatible land uses away from natural resources.

**Policy 6.1.12.14** - Through the Environmentally Significant Lands Program, the County shall continue the acquisition of properties for the preservation of and restoration of the Indian River Lagoon.

**Policy 6.1.12.15** – The County shall continue to support local environmental restoration, mitigation and adaptive management initiatives, including those related to habitat restoration, and coordinate with other state, regional and national strategic planning efforts to improve the resiliency of natural lands and systems to climate variability and hurricane intensification.

**Objective 6.1.13:** The County shall continue to implement the 2008 St. Lucie County Bicycle, Pedestrian, Greenways and Trails Master Plan to facilitate the implementation of ecological and recreational greenways within its jurisdiction when funding is available.

**Policy 6.1.13.1** - The County shall coordinate with the state and federal land acquisition programs to encourage connectivity between privately and publicly owned recreational and conservation lands.

**Policy 6.1.13.2** - The County shall pursue grants from local, state, federal, and private organizations to plan and assemble the greenway network.

**Policy 6.1.13.3** - The County shall encourage multiuse of greenways, as appropriate, to facilitate the development of shared recreation and wildlife corridor ecological greenways.

**Policy 6.1.13.4** – Nonpaved bicycle and pedestrian access shall be encouraged between uses where paved access would negatively impact existing habitats.

**Policy 6.1.13.5** - To the extent feasible, the County shall beautify and improve areas used by the general public (e.g. roads, sidewalks, bicycle paths, pedestrian walkways, parks and open space areas) to enhance vehicular and nonvehicular movements. The program shall encourage planting standards that promote the use of appropriate native plants in road and utility rights-of-way to restore the original native plant community to the extent practicable.

**Policy 6.1.13.6** - The County shall utilize, where possible, existing rights-of-way as wildlife corridors and pedestrian areas.

**Policy 6.1.13.7** - The County shall coordinate with appropriate state and federal agencies to identify natural area greenways and wildlife corridors to link existing public parks, preserve areas and similar areas for conservation and habitat preservation purposes.

**Policy 6.1.13.8** - The County shall consider incentives that encourage the granting of

conservation easements for natural linear greenways and/or scenic drives.

**Policy 6.1.13.9** - The County shall continue to map existing and proposed greenways, identify gaps in the greenway network, and set forth strategies for the maintenance and expansion of the existing network.

**Policy 6.1.13.10** - The County shall promote the preservation and maintenance of native plant communities in a contiguous manner to provide wildlife corridors and pedestrian pathways.

**Policy 6.1.13.11** - St. Lucie County shall continue to cooperate with adjacent local governments to conserve, appropriately use, or protect ecological greenways located within more than one jurisdiction.

**Objective 6.1.14:** St. Lucie County shall use a wetland classification system for purposes of protecting wetland functions and values within the unincorporated areas of St. Lucie County consistent with the Policies cited below.

**Policy 6.1.14.1** - St. Lucie County shall use the following general classification system for the purposes of protecting wetland functions and values within the unincorporated areas of St. Lucie County.

- a. Category I wetlands - shall include any wetlands, regardless of size, having hydrological connection to natural surface water bodies; any isolated wetland 20 acres or larger; or wetlands containing Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas as identified by the Florida Wildlife Conservation Commission.
- b. Category II wetlands -- shall include any isolated wetlands which are connected to other surface waters and are greater than or equal to 5 acres, or are less than 20 acres and do not qualify as Category I wetlands;
- c. Category III wetlands -- shall include isolated wetlands less than 5 acres that do not qualify as Category I or II wetlands, or wetlands which are connected to other surface waters and are less than 5 acres.

St. Lucie County shall require identification of Category I, II, and III wetlands prior to staff review of all land development proposals, including future land use, zoning, site plan or construction applications.

**Policy 6.1.14.2** - The County shall not permit development in a Category I or II wetland or any wetland buffer associated with these wetlands, except as follows:

- a. Clearing and /or constructing of walking trails;
- b. Construction of boardwalks/catwalks for direct access to water bodies; construction of wildlife management shelters, footbridges, observation desks and similar structures not requiring a dredge or fill for their placement; and
- c. Clearing and/or construction of electric/ cable utility, stormwater management, water or wastewater infrastructure as needed to provide public service that does not impair the long term viability of the wetland system.
- d. Alteration is permissible within Category I and II wetlands, and the required wetland buffer as necessary for the above activities if all the following criteria are met:
  1. No other reasonable alternative exists and avoidance cannot be achieved;
  2. Such activity is consistent with other policies of the Comprehensive Plan;
  3. Such activity complies with the requirements of all Federal, State and local agencies claiming jurisdiction over wetland alteration and adequate

- mitigation of any adverse hydrological and physical alterations is provided.
4. No more than one percent of any Category I wetland is impacted, except as noted in Policy 6.1.14.3;
  5. No more than 15 percent of any Category II wetland is impacted, except as noted in Policy 6.1.14.3;
  6. Appropriate mitigation is provided.

**Policy 6.1.14.3** - In addition to the alteration provisions of Policy 6.1.14.2, alteration of a Category I or II wetland or buffer may be allowed when no other reasonable alternative exists and avoidance and minimization of impacts cannot otherwise be achieved. Any provision of this Comprehensive Plan or the land development code related to the preservation of a Category I or II wetland or buffer that precludes all reasonable economically viable use of the property or would prohibit a reasonable public use of the property and which if applied would result in a compensable taking of the property may be waived to the extent necessary to provide the minimum reasonable use, public or private, of the property. These provisions shall only be waived following the review and approval of the Board of County Commissioners, or their designee, in a manner set forth in the Land Development Code. The standards for the granting of any waiver shall be set forth in the Land Development Code and shall be consistent with the general standards and intent of the Comprehensive Plan.

**Policy 6.1.14.4** - Alteration of a Category III wetland or buffer may be allowed when no reasonable alternative exists and avoidance and minimization of impacts cannot be achieved. Any provision of this Comprehensive Plan or the land development code related to the preservation of a Category III wetland or buffer that precludes all reasonable economically viable use of the property or would prohibit a reasonable public use of the property and which if applied would result in a compensable taking of the property may be waived to the extent necessary to provide the minimum reasonable use, public or private, of the property. These provisions shall only be waived following the review and approval of the Board of County Commissioners, or their designee, in a manner set forth in the Land Development Code. The standards for the granting of any waiver shall be set forth in the Land Development Code and shall be consistent with the general standards and intent of the Comprehensive Plan.

**Policy 6.1.14.5** - The County shall require a minimum 50-foot buffer between Category I or II wetlands and new development activity in order to protect water quality, preserve natural functions, and preserve wildlife habitat. The buffer, as measured landward from the approved jurisdictional line, shall be maintained in a natural vegetative state and be free of exotic and nuisance species as defined by the Florida Pest Council.

**Policy 6.1.14.6** - All new development containing a Category III wetland shall provide a minimum 25-foot buffer between the wetland jurisdictional line and the area of development. The buffer, as measured landward from the approved jurisdictional line, shall be maintained in a natural vegetative state and be free of exotic and nuisance species as defined by the Florida Pest Council.

**Policy 6.1.14.7** - St. Lucie County shall assess the specific and cumulative impacts of all proposed new development or redevelopment activities, including single family building permits, on all wetlands that may be located on the property in order to ensure that the natural functions of the wetlands are protected and conserved through the implementation of wetland protection standards which shall include consideration of the



types, values, functions, sizes, conditions, and locations of wetlands.

**Policy 6.1.14.8** - Removal, encroachment, or alternation of Category III wetlands may be allowed with the extent of such activities being determined on a case-by-case basis in conjunction with applicable regulatory agencies and in the interest of public benefit.

**Objective 6.1.15:** The Board of County Commissioners shall consider the Wetland Inventory and Evaluation Study which was designed to facilitate the development of policies and procedures to improve the protection of the existing wetlands in the County.

**Policy 6.1.15.1** - The County shall amend its Land Development Code to adopt wetland protection measures that will incorporate a classification system inclusive of wetland functionality and address gaps in the existing regulatory mechanisms.

**Policy 6.1.15.2** - Through the development review process the County shall continue to update the wetland inventory and mapping tools.