

## **Group 1 – General purpose and structure of the Collier County Rural Lands Stewardship Area Overlay**

### **Policy 1.1:**

To promote a dynamic balance of land uses in the Collier County Rural Lands Stewardship Area (RLSA) that collectively contribute to a viable agricultural industry, protect natural resources, and enhance economic prosperity and diversification, Collier County hereby establishes the Rural Lands Stewardship Area Overlay (Overlay). The Overlay was created through a collaborative community based planning process involving county residents, area property owners, and representatives of community and governmental organizations under the direction of a citizen oversight committee.

### **Policy 1.2:**

The Overlay protects natural resources and retains viable agriculture by promoting compact rural mixed-use development as an alternative to low-density single use development, and provides a system of compensation to private property owners for the elimination of certain land uses in order to protect natural resources and viable agriculture in exchange for transferable credits that can be used to entitle such compact development. The strategies herein are based in part on the principles of Florida's Rural Lands Stewardship Act, Section 163.3248, Florida Statutes. The Overlay includes innovative and incentive based tools, techniques and strategies that are not dependent on a regulatory approach, but will complement existing local, regional, state and federal regulatory programs.

### **Policy 1.3:**

This Overlay to the Future Land Use Map is depicted on the Stewardship Overlay Map (Overlay Map) and applies to rural designated lands located within the Immokalee Area Study boundary of the Collier County Rural and Agricultural Area Assessment referred to in the State of Florida Administration Commission Final Order No. AC-99-002. The RLSA generally includes rural lands in northeast Collier County lying north and east of Golden Gate Estates, north of the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge and Big Cypress National Preserve, south of the Lee County Line, and south and west of the Hendry County Line, and includes a total of approximately 195,846 acres, of which approximately 182,334 acres is privately owned. The Overlay Map is an adopted overlay to the Future Land Use Map (FLUM).

### **Policy 1.4:**

Except as provided in Group 5 Policies, there shall be no change to the underlying density and intensity of permitted uses of land within the RLSA, as set forth in the Baseline Standards, as defined in Policy 1.5, unless and until a property owner elects to utilize the provisions of the Stewardship Credit System. It is the intent of the Overlay that a property owner will be compensated for the voluntary stewardship and protection of important agricultural and natural resources. Compensation to the property owner shall occur through one of the following mechanisms: creation and transfer of Stewardship Credits, acquisition of conservation easements, acquisition of less than fee interest in the land, or through other acquisition of land or interest in land through a willing seller program.

### **Policy 1.5:**

As referred to in these Overlay policies, Baseline Standards are the permitted uses, density, intensity and other land development regulations assigned to land in the RLSA by the GMP, Collier County Land Development Regulations and Collier County Zoning Regulations in

effect prior to the adoption of Interim Amendments and Interim Development Provisions referenced in Final Order AC-99-002. The Baseline Standards will remain in effect for all land not subject to the transfer or receipt of Stewardship Credits, except as provided for in Group 5 Policies. No part of the Stewardship Credit System shall be imposed upon a property owner without that owner's consent.

**Policy 1.6:**

Stewardship Credits (Credits) are created from any lands within the RLSA that are to be kept in permanent agriculture, open space or conservation uses. These lands will be identified as Stewardship Sending Areas or SSAs. All privately owned lands within the RLSA are a candidate for designation as a SSA. Land becomes designated as a SSA upon petition by the property owner seeking such designation and the adoption of a resolution by the Collier County Board of County Commissioners (BCC), which acknowledges the property owner's request for such designation and assigns Stewardship Credits or other compensation to the owner for such designation. Collier County will update the Overlay Map to delineate the boundaries of each approved SSA. Designation as an SSA shall be administrative and shall not require an amendment to the Growth Management Plan, but shall be retroactively incorporated into the adopted Overlay Map during the EAR based amendment process when it periodically occurs, or sooner at the discretion of the Board of County Commissioners. A Stewardship Agreement shall be developed that identifies those allowable residential densities and other land uses which remain. Once land is designated as a SSA and Credits or other compensation is granted to the owner, no increase in density or additional uses unspecified in the Stewardship Agreement shall be allowed on such property.

**Policy 1.7:**

The range of Stewardship Credit Values is hereby established using the specific methodology set forth on the Stewardship Credit Worksheet (Worksheet), incorporated herein as Attachment A. This methodology and related procedures for SSA designation will also be adopted as part of the Stewardship Overlay District in the Collier County Land Development Code (LDC). Such procedures shall include but not be limited to the following: (1) All Credit transfers shall be recorded with the Collier County Clerk of Courts; (2) a covenant or perpetual restrictive easement shall also be recorded for each SSA, shall run with the land and shall be in favor of Collier County, Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, South Florida Water Management District, or a recognized statewide land trust; and (3) for each SSA, the Stewardship Agreement will identify the specific land management measures that will be undertaken and the party responsible for such measures.

**Policy 1.8:**

The natural resource value of land within the RLSA is measured by the Stewardship Natural Resource Index (Index) set forth on the Worksheet. The Index established the relative natural resource value by objectively measuring six different characteristics of land and assigning an index factor based on each characteristic. The sum of these six factors is the index value for the land. Both the characteristics used and the factors assigned thereto were established after review and analysis of detailed information about the natural resource attributes of land within the RLSA so that development could be directed away from important natural resources. The six characteristics measured are: Stewardship Overlay Designation, Sending Area Proximity, Listed Species Habitat, Soils/Surface Water, Restoration Potential, and Land Use/Land Cover.

**Policy 1.9:**

A Natural Resource Index Map Series (Index Map Series) indicates the Natural Resource Stewardship Index value for all land within the RLSA. Credits from any lands designated as SSAs, will be based upon the Natural Resource Index values in effect at the time of designation. Any change in the Characteristics of land due to alteration of the land prior to the establishment of a SSA that either increases or decreases any Index Factor will result in an adjustment of the factor values and a corresponding adjustment in the credit value. The Index and the Index Map Series are adopted as a part of the RLSA Overlay.

**Policy 1.10:**

In SSAs, the greater the number of uses eliminated from the property, and the higher the natural resource value of the land, the higher the priority for protection, the greater the level of Credits that are generated from such lands, and therefore the greater the incentive to participate in the Stewardship Credit System and protect the natural resources of the land.

**Policy 1.11:**

The Land Use Matrix, Attachment B, lists uses and activities allowed under the A, Rural Agricultural Zoning District within the Overlay. These uses are grouped together in one of eight separate layers in the Matrix. Each layer is discrete and shall be removed sequentially and cumulatively in the order presented in the Matrix, starting with the residential layer (layer one) and ending with the conservation layer (layer eight). If a layer is removed, all uses and activities in that layer are eliminated and are no longer available. Each layer is assigned a percentage of a base credit in the Worksheet. The assigned percentage for each layer to be removed is added together and then multiplied by the Index value on a per acre basis to arrive at a total Stewardship Credit Value of the land being designated as a SSA.

**Policy 1.12:**

Credits can be transferred only to lands within the RLSA that meet the defined suitability criteria and standards set forth in Group 4 Policies. Such lands shall be known as Stewardship Receiving Areas or SRAs.

**Policy 1.13:**

The procedures for the establishment and transfer of Credits and SRA designation are set forth herein and will also be adopted as a part of a Stewardship District in the LDC (District) LDRs creating the District will be adopted within one (1) year from the effective date of this Plan amendment.

**Policy 1.14:**

Stewardship Credits will be exchanged for additional residential or non-residential entitlements in a SRA on a per acre basis, as described in Policy 4.18. Stewardship density and intensity will thereafter differ from the Baseline Standards. The assignment or use of Stewardship Credits shall not require a GMP Amendment.

**Policy 1.15:**

Land becomes designated as an SRA upon the adoption of a resolution by the Collier County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) approving the petition by the property owner seeking such designation. Any change in the residential density or non-residential intensity of land use on a parcel of land located within a SRA shall be specified in the resolution

reflecting the total number of transferable Credits assigned to the parcel of land. Density and intensity within the RLSA or within an SRA shall not be increased beyond the Baseline Standards except through the provisions of the Stewardship Credit System, the Affordable-workforce Housing Density Bonus as referenced in the Density Rating System of the FLUE, and the density and intensity blending provision of the Immokalee Area Master Plan.

**Policy 1.16:**

Stewardship Receiving Areas will accommodate uses that utilize creative land use planning techniques and Credits shall be used to facilitate the implementation of innovative and flexible development strategies described in Section 163.3168(2), Florida Statutes.

**Policy 1.17:**

Stewardship Credits may be transferred between different parcels or within a single parcel, subject to compliance with all applicable provisions of these policies. Residential clustering shall only occur within the RLSA through the use of the Stewardship Credit System, and other forms of residential clustering shall not be permitted.

**Policy 1.18:**

A blend of Local, State, Federal and private revenues, such as but not limited to Florida Forever, Federal and State conservation and stewardship programs, foundation grants, private conservation organizations, local option taxes, general county revenues, and other monies can augment the Stewardship program through the acquisition of conservation easements, Credits, or land that is identified as the highest priority for natural resource protection, including, but is not limited to, areas identified on the Overlay Map as Flow way Stewardship Areas (FSAs), Habitat Stewardship Areas (HSAs), Water Retention Areas (WRAs) and land within the Big Cypress Area of Critical State Concern (ACSC).

**Policy 1.19:**

All local land or easement acquisition programs that are intended to work within the RLSA Overlay shall be based upon a willing participant/seller approach. It is not the intent of Collier County to use eminent domain acquisition within this system.

**Policy 1.20:**

The County may elect to acquire Credits through a publicly funded program, using sources identified in Policy 1.18. Should the County pursue this option, it shall establish a Stewardship Credit Trust to receive and hold Credits until such time as they are sold, transferred or otherwise used to implement uses within Stewardship Receiving Areas.

**Policy 1.21:**

The incentive based Stewardship Credit system relies on the projected demand for Credits As the primary basis for permanent protection of flowways, habitats and water retention areas. The County recognizes that there may be a lack of significant demand for Credits in the early years of implementation, and also recognizes that a public benefit would be realized by the early designation of SSAs. To address this issue and to promote the protection of natural resources, the implementation of the Overlay will include an early entry bonus to encourage the voluntary establishment of SSAs within the RLSA. The bonus shall be in the form of an additional one Stewardship Credit per acre of land designated as a HSA located outside of the ACSC and one-half Stewardship Credit per acre of land designated as HSA located inside the ACSC. The early entry bonus shall be available for five years from the effective date of the adoption of the Stewardship Credit System in the LDC. The early designation of SSAs, and resulting protection of flowways, habitats, and Water retention areas does not require the

establishment of SRAs or otherwise require the early use of Credits, and Credits generated under the early entry bonus may be used after the termination of the bonus period. The maximum number of Credits that can be generated under the bonus is 27,000 Credits, and such Credits shall not be transferred into or used within the ACSC.

**Policy 1.22:**

The RLSA Overlay was designed to be a long-term strategic plan with a planning horizon Year of 2025. Many of the tools, techniques and strategies of the Overlay are new, Innovative, incentive based, and have yet to be tested in actual implementation. A Comprehensive review of the Overlay shall be prepared for and reviewed by Collier County and the State land planning agency (presently, the Department of Economic Opportunity) upon the five-year anniversary of the adoption of the Stewardship District in the LDC. The purpose of the review shall be to assess the participation in and effectiveness of the Overlay implementation in meeting the Goal, Objective and Policies set forth herein. The specific measures of review shall be as follows:

1. The amount and location of land designated as FSAs, HSAs, WRAs and other SSAs.
2. The amount and location of land designated as SRAs.
3. The number of Stewardship Credits generated, assigned or held for future use.
4. A comparison of the amount, location and type of Agriculture that existed at the time of a Study and time of review.
5. The amount, location and type of land converted to non-agricultural use with and without participation in the Stewardship Credit System since its adoption.
6. The extent and use of funding provided by Collier County and other sources Local, State, Federal and private revenues described in Policy 1.18.
7. The amount, location and type of restoration through participation in the Stewardship Credit System since its adoption.
8. The potential for use of Credits in urban areas.
  - (4) Any other conservation and related open space activity or use which is comparable in nature with the foregoing uses.
  - v. A structural buffer may consist of a stem-wall, berm, or vegetative hedge with suitable fencing.
  - f. Mitigation shall be required for direct impacts to wetland in order to result in no net loss of wetland functions.

**Mitigation Requirements:**

- i. "No net loss of wetland functions" shall mean that the wetland functional score of the proposed mitigation equals or exceeds the wetland functional score of the impacted wetlands. Priority shall be given to mitigation within FSA's and HSA's.
- ii. Loss of storage or conveyance volume resulting from direct impacts to wetlands shall be compensated for by providing an equal amount of storage or conveyance capacity on site and within or abutting the impacted wetland.
- iii. Protection shall be provided for preserved or created wetland or upland vegetative communities offered as mitigation by placing a conservation easement over the land in perpetuity, providing for initial exotic plant removal (Class I invasive exotic plants defined by the Florida Exotic Plant Council) and continuing exotic plant maintenance, or by appropriate ownership transfer to a

state or federal agency along with sufficient funding for perpetual management activities.

- iv. Prior to issuance of any final development order that authorizes site alteration, the applicant shall demonstrate compliance with paragraphs (f) i, ii, and iii of this Policy. If agency permits have not provided mitigation consistent with this Policy, Collier County will require mitigation exceeding that of the jurisdictional agencies.
  
- g. Wetland preservation, buffer areas, and mitigation areas shall be identified or platted as separate tracts. In the case of a Planned Unit Development (PUD), these areas shall also be depicted on the PUD Master Plan. These areas shall be maintained free from trash and debris and from Category I invasive exotic plants, as defined by the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council. Land uses allowed in these areas shall be limited to those listed above (3.e.iv.) and shall not include any other activities that are detrimental to drainage, flood, control, water conservation, erosion control or fish and wildlife habitat conservation and preservation

## **Group 2 – Policies to protect agricultural lands from premature conversion to other uses and continue the viability of agricultural production through the Collier County Rural Lands Stewardship Area Overlay.**

### **Policy 2.1**

Agriculture lands will be protected from premature conversion to other uses by creating incentives that encourage the voluntary elimination of the property owner's right to convert agriculture land to non-agricultural uses in exchange for compensation as described in Policy 1.4 and by the establishment of SRAs as the form of compact rural development in the RLSA Overlay. Analysis has shown that SRAs will allow the projected population of the RLSA in the Horizon year of 2025 to be accommodated on approximately 10% of the acreage otherwise required if such compact rural development were not allowed due to the flexibility afforded to such development. The combination of stewardship incentives and land efficient compact rural development will minimize two of the primary market factors that cause premature conversion of agriculture.

### **Policy 2.2**

Agriculture lands protected through the use of Stewardship Credits shall be designated as Stewardship Sending Areas (SSAs) as described in Policy 1.6. The protection measures for SSAs are set forth in Policies 1.6, 1.7 and 1.17.

### **Policy 2.3**

Within one (1) year from the effective date of these amendments, Collier County will establish an Agriculture Advisory Council comprised of not less than five nor more than nine appointed representatives of the agriculture industry, to advise the BCC on matters relating to Agriculture. The Agriculture Advisory Council (AAC) will work to identify opportunities and prepare strategies to enhance and promote the continuance, expansion and diversification of agriculture in Collier County. The AAC will also identify barriers to the continuance, expansion and diversification of the agricultural industry and will prepare recommendations to eliminate or minimize such barriers in Collier County. The AAC will also assess whether exceptions from standards for business uses related to agriculture should

be allowed under an administrative permit process and make recommendations to the BCC.

#### **Policy 2.4**

The BCC will consider the recommendations of the AAC and facilitate the implementation of strategies and recommendations identified by the ACC that are determined to be appropriate. The BCC may adopt amendments to the LDC that implement policies that support agriculture activities.

#### **Policy 2.5**

Agriculture is an important aspect of Collier County's quality of life and economic well-being. Agricultural activities shall be protected from duplicative regulation as provided by the Florida Right-to-Farm Act.

#### **Policy 2.6**

Notwithstanding the special provisions of Policies 3.9 and 3.10, nothing herein or in the implementing LDRs, shall restrict lawful agricultural activities on lands within the RLSA that have not been placed into the Stewardship program.

**Group 3 – Policies to protect water quality and quantity and maintain the natural water regime, as well as listed animal and plant species and their habitats by directing incompatible uses away from wetlands and upland habitat through the establishment of Flow way Stewardship Areas, Habitat Stewardship Areas, and Water Retention Areas, where lands are voluntarily included in the Rural Lands Stewardship Area program.**

#### **Policy 3.1**

Protection of water quality and quantity, and the maintenance of the natural water regime shall occur through the establishment of Flowway Stewardship Areas (FSAs), as SSAs within the RLSA Overlay. FSAs are delineated on the Overlay Map and contain approximately 31,100 acres. FSAs are primarily privately owned wetlands that are located within the Camp Keais Strand and Okaloacoochee Slough. These lands form the primary wetland flowway systems in the RLSA. The Overlay provides an incentive to permanently protect FSAs by the creation and transfer of Credits, elimination of incompatible uses, and establishment of protection measures described in Group 1 Policies. Not all lands within the delineated FSAs are comparable in terms of their natural resource value; therefore, the index shall be used to differentiate higher value from lower value lands for the purpose of Overlay implementation. Analysis of the Index Map Series shows that FSA lands score within a range of 0.7 to 2.4; approximately 96% score greater than 1.2 while 4% score 1.2 or less. The average Index score of FSA land is 1.8.

#### **Policy 3.2**

Listed animal and plant species and their habitats shall be protected through the establishment of Habitat Stewardship Areas (HSAs), as SSAs within the RLSA Overlay. HSAs are delineated on the Overlay Map and contain approximately 40,000 acres. HSAs are privately owned agricultural areas, which include both areas with natural characteristics that make them suitable habitat for listed species and areas without these characteristics. These latter areas are included

because they are located contiguous to habitat to help form a continuum of landscape that can augment habitat values. The Overlay provides an incentive to permanently protect HSAs by the creation and transfer of Credits, resulting in the elimination of incompatible uses and the establishment of protection measures described in Group 1 Policies. Not all lands within the delineated HSAs are comparable in terms of their habitat value; therefore, the index shall be used to differentiate higher value from lower value lands for the purpose of Overlay implementation. Analysis of the Index Map Series shows that HAS lands score within a range of 0.6 to 2.2. There are approximately 13,800 acres of cleared agricultural fields located in HSAs. The average Index score of HAS designated lands is 1.3, however, the average index score of the naturally vegetated areas within HSAs is 1.5.

### **Policy 3.3**

Further protection for surface water quality and quantity shall be through the establishment of Water Retention Areas (WRAs), as SSAs within the RLSA Overlay. WRAs are delineated on the Overlay Map and contain approximately 18,200 acres. WRAs are privately owned lands that have been permitted by the South Florida Water Management District to function as agricultural water retention areas. In many instances, these WRAs consist of native wetland or upland vegetation; in other cases they are excavated water bodies or may contain exotic vegetation. The Overlay provides an incentive to permanently protect WRAs by the creation and transfer of Credits, elimination of incompatible uses, and establishment of protection measures described in Group 1 Policies. Not all lands within the delineated WRAs are comparable in terms of their natural resource value; therefore, the index shall be used to differentiate higher value from lower value lands for the purpose of Overlay implementation. Analysis of the Index Map Series shows that WRA lands score within a range of 0.6 to 2.4;

approximately 74% score greater than 1.2 while 26% score 1.2 or less. The average Index score of WRA land is 1.5.

### **Policy 3.4**

Public and private conservation areas exist in the RLSA and serve to protect natural resources. Corkscrew Marsh and Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest include approximately 13,500 acres. Analysis shows that they score within an Index range of 0.0 to 2.2; with an average Index score of 1.5. Because these existing public areas, and any private conservation areas, are already protected, they are not delineated as SSAs and are not eligible to generate Credits, but do serve an important role in meeting the Goal of the RLSA.

### **Policy 3.5**

Residential uses, General Conditional uses, Earth Mining and Processing Uses, and Recreational Uses (layers 1-4) as listed in the Matrix shall be eliminated in FSAs in exchange for compensation to the property owner as described in Policy 3.8. Conditional use essential services and governmental essential services, other than those necessary to serve permitted uses or for public safety, shall only be allowed in FSAs with a Natural Resource Stewardship Index value of 1.2 or less. Where practicable, directional-drilling techniques and/or previously cleared or disturbed areas shall be utilized for oil and gas extraction in FSAs in order to

minimize impacts to native habitats. Other layers may also be eliminated at the election of the property owner in exchange for compensation. The elimination of the Earth Mining layer shall not preclude the excavation of lakes or other water bodies if such use is an integral part of a restoration or mitigation program within a FSA.

### **Policy 3.6**

Residential Land Uses listed in the Matrix shall be eliminated in Habitat Stewardship Sending Areas in exchange for compensation to the property owner as described in Policy 3.8. Other layers may also be eliminated at the election of the property owner in exchange for compensation.

### **Policy 3.7**

General Conditional Uses, Earth Mining and Processing Uses, and Recreational Uses shall be allowed only on HSA lands with a Natural Resource Stewardship Index value of 1.2 or less. Conditional use essential services and governmental essential services, other than those necessary to serve permitted uses or for public safety, shall only be allowed in HSAs with a Natural Resource Stewardship Index value of 1.2 or less. Asphaltic and concrete batch making plants are prohibited in all HSAs. Where practicable, directional-drilling techniques and/or previously cleared or disturbed areas shall be utilized for oil and gas Extraction in HSAs in order to minimize impacts to native habitats. In addition to the requirements imposed in the LDC for approval of a Conditional Use, such uses will only be approved upon submittal of an EIS which demonstrates that clearing of native vegetation has been minimized, the use will not significantly and adversely impact listed species and their habitats and the use will not significantly and adversely impact aquifers. As an alternative to the foregoing, the applicant may demonstrate that such use is an integral part of an approved restoration or mitigation program. Golf Course design, construction, and operation in any HSA shall comply with the best management practices of Audubon International's Gold Program and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Compliance with the following standards shall be considered by Collier County as meeting the requirement for minimization of impact:

- Clearing of native vegetation shall not exceed 15% of the native vegetation on the parcel.
- Areas previously cleared shall be used preferentially to native vegetated areas.
- Buffering to Conservation Land shall comply with Policy 4.13.

### **Policy 3.8**

Compensation to the property owner may occur through one or more of the following mechanisms: creation and transfer of Stewardship Credits, acquisition of conservation easements, acquisition of less than fee interest in the land, or through other acquisition of land or interest in land through a willing seller program.

### **Policy 3.9**

1. Agriculture will continue to be a permitted use and its supporting activities will continue to be permitted as conditional uses within FSAs and HSAs, pursuant to the Agriculture Group classifications described in the Matrix. The Ag 1 group includes row crops, citrus, specialty farms, horticulture, plant nurseries, improved pastures for grazing and ranching, aquaculture and similar activities,

including related agricultural support uses. In existing Ag 1 areas within FSAs and HSAs, all such activities are permitted to continue, and may convert from one type of Agriculture to another and expand to the limits allowed by applicable permits. Once the Stewardship Credit System is utilized and an owner receives compensation as previously described, no further expansion of Ag 1 will be allowed in FSAs and HSAs beyond existing or permitted limits within property subject to a credit transfer, except for incidental clearing as set forth in Paragraph 2 below.

2. In order to encourage viable Ag 1 activities, and to accommodate the ability to convert from one Ag 1 use to another, incidental clearing is allowed to join existing Ag 1 areas, square up existing farm fields, or provide access to or from other Ag 1 areas, provided that the Ag 1 Land Use Layer has been retained on the areas to be incidentally cleared, and the Natural Resource Index Value score has been adjusted to reflect the proposed change in land cover. Incidental clearing is defined as clearing that meets the above criteria and is limited to 1% of the area of the SSA. In the event said incidental clearing impacts lands having a Natural Resource Index Value in excess of 1.2, appropriate mitigation shall be provided.

### **Policy 3.10**

Ag 2 includes unimproved pastures for grazing and ranching, forestry and similar activities, including related agricultural support uses. In existing Ag 2 areas within FSAs and HSAs, such activities are permitted to continue, and may convert from one type of Agriculture to another and expand to the limits allowed by applicable permits. Once the Stewardship Credit System is utilized and an owner receives compensation as previously described, no further expansion of Ag 2 or conversion of Ag 2 to Ag 1 will be allowed in FSAs or HSAs beyond existing or permitted limits within property subject to a credit transfer.

### **Policy 3.11**

In certain locations there may be the opportunity for flow-way or habitat restoration. Examples include, but are not limited to, locations where flow-ways have been constricted or otherwise impeded by past activities, or where additional land is needed to enhance wildlife corridors. Priority shall be given to restoration within the Camp Keais Strand FSA or contiguous HSAs. Should a property owner be willing to dedicate land for restoration activities within the Camp Keais Strand FSA or contiguous HSAs, four additional Stewardship Credits shall be assigned for each acre of land so dedicated. An additional two Stewardship credits shall be assigned for each acre of land dedicated for restoration activities within other FSAs and HSAs. The actual implementation of restoration improvements is not required for the owner to receive such credits and the costs of restoration shall be borne by the governmental agency or private entity undertaking the restoration. Should an owner also complete restoration improvements, this shall be rewarded with four additional Credits for each acre of restored land upon demonstration that the restoration met applicable success criteria as determined by the permit agency authorizing said restoration. This policy does not preclude other forms of compensation for restoration which may be addressed through public-private partnership agreement such as a developer contribution agreement or stewardship agreement between the parties involved. The specific process for assignment of additional restoration credits shall be included in the Stewardship

District of the LDC.

**Policy 3.12**

Based on the data and analysis of the Study, FSAs, HSAs, WRAs, and existing public/private conservation land include the land appropriate and necessary to accomplish the Goal pertaining to natural resource protection. To further direct other uses away from and to provide additional incentive for the protection, enhancement and restoration of the Okaloacoochee Slough and Camp Keais Strand, all land within 500 feet of the delineated FSAs that comprise the Slough or Strand that is not otherwise included in a HSA or WRA shall receive the same natural index score (0.6) that a HSA receives if such property is designated as a SSA and retains only agricultural, recreational and/or conservation layers within the matrix.

**Policy 3.13**

Water Retention Areas (WRAs) as generally depicted on the Overlay Map have been permitted for this purpose and will continue to function for surface water retention, detention, treatment and/or conveyance, in accordance with the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) permits applicable to each WRA. WRAs can also be permitted to provide such functions for new uses of land allowed within the Overlay. WRAs may be incorporated into a SRA master plan to provide water management functions for properties within such SRA, but are not required to be designated as a SRA in such instances. WRA boundaries are understood to be approximate and are subject to refinement in accordance with SFWMD permitting.

**Policy 3.14**

During permitting to serve new uses, additions and modifications to WRAs may be required or desired, including but not limited to changes to control elevations, discharge rates, storm water pre-treatment, grading, excavation or fill. Such additions and modifications shall be allowed subject to review and approval by the SFWMD in accordance with best management practices. Such additions and modifications to WRAs shall be designed to ensure that there is no net loss of habitat function within the WRAs unless there is compensating mitigation or restoration in other areas of the Overlay that will provide comparable habitat function. Compensating mitigation or restoration for an impact to a WRA contiguous to the Camp Keais Strand or Okaloacoochee Slough shall be provided within or contiguous to that Strand or Slough.

**Group 4- Policies to enable conversion of rural lands to other uses in appropriate locations, while discouraging urban sprawl, and encouraging development that utilizes creative land use planning techniques by the establishment of Stewardship Receiving Areas.**

**Policy 4.1**

Collier County will encourage and facilitate uses that enable economic prosperity and diversification of the economic base of the RLSA. Collier County will also encourage development that utilizes creative land use planning techniques and facilitates a compact form of development to accommodate population growth by the establishment of Stewardship Receiving Areas (SRAs). Incentives to encourage and support the diversification and vitality of the rural economy such as flexible development regulations, expedited permitting review, and targeted capital

improvements shall be incorporated into the LDC Stewardship District.

#### **Policy 4.2**

All privately owned lands within the RLSA which meet the criteria set forth herein are eligible for designation as a SRA, except land delineated as a FSA, HSA, WRA or land that has been designated as a Stewardship Sending Area. Land proposed for SRA designation shall meet the suitability criteria and other standards described in Group 4 Policies. Due to the long-term vision of the RLSA Overlay, extending to a horizon year of 2025, and in accordance with the guidelines established in Chapter 163.3177(11) F.S., the specific location, size and composition of each SRA cannot and need not be predetermined in the GMP. In the RLSA Overlay, lands that are eligible to be designated as SRAs generally have similar physical attributes as they consist predominately of agriculture lands which have been cleared or otherwise altered for this purpose. Lands shown on the Overlay Map as eligible for SRA designation include approximately 74,500 acres outside of the ACSC and 18,300 acres within the ACSC. Approximately 2% of these lands achieve an Index score greater than 1.2. Because the Overlay requires SRAs to be compact, mixed-use and self-sufficient in the provision of services, facilities and infrastructure, traditional locational standards normally applied to determine development suitability are not relevant or applicable to SRAs. Therefore, the process for designating a SRA follows the principles of the Rural Lands Stewardship Act as further described herein.

#### **Policy 4.3**

Land becomes designated as a SRA upon petition by a property owner to Collier County seeking such designation and the adoption of a resolution by the BCC granting the designation. The petition shall include a SRA master plan as described in Policy 4.5. The basis for approval shall be a finding of consistency with the policies of the Overlay, including required suitability criteria set forth herein, compliance with the LDC Stewardship District, and assurance that the applicant has acquired or will acquire sufficient Stewardship Credits to implement the SRA uses. Within one year from the effective date of this amendment, Collier County shall adopt LDC amendments to establish the procedures and submittal requirements for designation as a SRA, to include provisions for consideration of impacts, including environmental and public infrastructure impacts, and provisions for public notice of and the opportunity for public participation in any consideration by the BCC of such a designation.

#### **Policy 4.4**

Collier County will update the Overlay Map to delineate the boundaries of each approved SRA. Such updates shall not require an amendment to the Growth Management Plan, but shall be retroactively incorporated into the adopted Overlay

Map during the EAR based amendment process when it periodically occurs.

#### **Policy 4.5**

To address the specifics of each SRA, a master plan of each SRA will be prepared and submitted to Collier County as a part of the petition for designation as a SRA. The master plan will demonstrate that the SRA complies with all applicable policies of the Overlay and the LDC Stewardship District and is designed so that incompatible land uses are directed away from wetlands and critical habitat identified as FSAs and HSAs on the Overlay Map.

**Policy 4.6**

SRA characteristics shall be based upon innovative planning and development strategies referenced in Chapter 163.3177 (11), F.S. and 9J-5.006(5)(I). These planning strategies and techniques include urban villages, new towns, satellite communities, area-based allocations, clustering and open space provisions, and mixed-use development that allow the conversion of rural and agricultural lands to other uses while protecting environmentally sensitive areas, maintaining the economic viability of agricultural and other predominantly rural land uses, and providing for the cost-efficient delivery of public facilities and services. Such development strategies are recognized as methods of discouraging urban sprawl.

**Policy 4.7**

There are four specific forms of SRA permitted within the Overlay. These are Towns, Villages, Hamlets, and Compact Rural Development (CRD). The Characteristics of Towns, Villages, Hamlets, and CRD are set forth in Attachment C and are generally described in Policies 4.7.1, 4.7.2, 4.7.3 and 4.7.4. Collier County shall establish more specific regulations, guidelines and standards within the LDC Stewardship District to guide the design and development of SRAs to include innovative planning and development strategies as set forth in Chapter 163.3177 (11), F.S. and 0J-5.006(5)(I). The size and base density of each form shall be consistent with the standards set forth on Attachment C. The maximum base residential density as set forth in Attachment C may only be exceeded through the density blending process as set forth in density and intensity blending provision of the Immokalee Area Master Plan or through the affordable housing density bonus as referenced in the Density Rating System of the Future Land Use Element. The base residential density is calculated by dividing the total number of residential units in a SRA by the overall area therein. The base residential density does not restrict net residential density of parcels within a SRA. The location, size and density of each SRA will be determined on an individual basis during the SRA designation review and approval process.

**Policy 4.7.1**

Towns are the largest and most diverse form of SRA, with a full range of housing types and mix of uses. Towns have urban level services and infrastructure which support development that is compact, mixed use, human scale, and provides a balance of land uses to reduce automobile trips and increase livability. Towns shall be not less than 1,000 acres or more than 4,000 acres and are comprised of several villages and/or neighborhoods that have individual identity and character. Towns shall have a mixed-use town center that will serve as a focal point for community facilities and support services. Towns shall be designed to encourage pedestrian and bicycle circulation by including an interconnected sidewalk and pathway system serving all residential neighborhoods. Towns shall have at least one community park with a minimum size of 200 square feet per dwelling unit in the Town.

Towns shall also have parks or public green spaces within neighborhoods. Towns shall include both community and neighborhood scaled retail and office uses, in a ratio as provided in Policy 4.15. Towns may also include those compatible corporate office and light industrial uses as those permitted in the Business Park and Research and Technology Park Subdistricts of the FLUE. Towns shall be the preferred location for the full range of schools, and to the extent possible, schools

and parks shall be located adjacent to each other to allow for the sharing of recreational facilities. Design criteria for Towns shall be included in the LDC Stewardship District. Towns shall not be located within the ACSC.

#### **Policy 4.7.2**

Villages are primarily residential communities with a diversity of housing types and mix of uses appropriate to the scale and character of the particular village. Villages shall be not less than 100 acres or more than 1,000 acres. Villages are comprised of residential neighborhoods and shall include a mixed-use village center to serve as the focal point for the community's support services and facilities. Villages shall be designed to encourage pedestrian and bicycle circulation by including an interconnected sidewalk and pathway system serving all residential neighborhoods. Villages shall have parks or public green spaces within neighborhoods. Villages shall include neighborhood scaled retail and office uses, in a ratio as provided in Policy 4.15. Villages are an appropriate location for a full range of schools. To the extent possible, schools and parks shall be located adjacent to each other to allow for the sharing of recreational facilities. Design criteria for Villages shall be included in the LDC Stewardship District.

#### **Policy 4.7.3**

Hamlets are small rural residential areas with primarily single-family housing and limited range of convenience-oriented services. Hamlets shall be not less than 40 or more than 100 acres. Hamlets will serve as a more compact alternative to traditional five-acre lot rural subdivisions currently allowed in the baseline standards. Hamlets shall have a public green space for neighborhoods. Hamlets include convenience retail uses, in a ratio as provided in Attachment C. Hamlets may be an appropriate location for pre-K through elementary schools. Design criteria for Hamlets shall be included in the LDC Stewardship District. To maintain a proportion of Hamlets to Villages and Towns, not more than 5 Hamlets, in combination with CRDs of 100 acres or less, may be approved as SRAs prior to the approval of a Village or Town, and thereafter not more than 5 additional Hamlets, in combination with CRDs of 100 acres or less, may be approved for each subsequent Village or Town.

#### **Policy 4.7.4**

Compact Rural Development (CRD) is a form of SRA that will provide flexibility with respect to the mix of uses and design standards, but shall otherwise comply with the standards of a Hamlet or Village. A CRD may include, but is not required to have permanent residential housing and the services and facilities that support permanent residents. An example of a CRD is an ecotourism village that would have a unique set of uses and support services different from a traditional residential village. It would contain transient lodging facilities and services appropriate to eco-tourists, but may not provide for the range of services that necessary to support permanent residents. Except as described above, a CRD will conform to the characteristics of a Village or Hamlet as set forth on Attachment C based on the size of the CRD. As residential units are not a required use, those goods and services that support residents such as retail, office, civic, governmental and institutional uses shall also not be required, however for any CRD that does include permanent residential housing, the proportionate support services listed above shall be provided in accordance with Attachment C. To maintain a proportion of CRDs of 100 acres or less to Villages and Towns, not more than 5 CRDs of 100 acres or less, in combination with Hamlets, may be

approved as SRAs prior to the approval of a Village or Town, and thereafter not more than 5 additional CRDs of 100 acres or less, in combination with Hamlets, may be approved for each subsequent Village or Town. There shall be no more than 5 CRDs of more than 100 acres in size. The appropriateness of this limitation shall be reviewed in 5 years pursuant to Policy 1.22.

**Policy 4.8**

An SRA may be contiguous to a FSA or HSA, but shall not encroach into such areas, and shall buffer such areas as described in Policy 4.13. A SRA may be contiguous to and served by a WRA without requiring the WRA to be designated as a SRA in accordance with Policy 3.12 and 3.13.

**Policy 4.9**

A SRA must contain sufficient suitable land to accommodate the planned development in an environmentally acceptable manner. The primary means of directing development away from wetlands and critical habitat is the prohibition of locating SRAs in FSAs, HSAs, and WRAs. To further direct development away from wetlands and critical habitat, residential, commercial, manufacturing/light industrial, group housing, and transient housing, institutional, civic and community service uses within a SRA shall not be sited on lands that receive a Natural Resource Index value of greater than 1.2. In addition, conditional use essential services and governmental essential services, with the exception of those necessary to serve permitted uses and for public safety, shall not be sited on lands that receive a Natural Resource Index value of greater than 1.2. The Index value of greater than 1.2 represents those areas that have a high natural resource value as measured pursuant to Policy 1.8. Less than 2% of potential SRA land achieves an Index score of greater than 1.2.

**Policy 4.10**

Within the RLSA Overlay, open space, which by definition shall include public and private conservation lands, underdeveloped areas of designated SSAs, agriculture, water retention and management areas and recreation uses, will continue to be the dominant land use. Therefore, open space adequate to serve the forecasted population and uses within the SRA is provided. To ensure that SRA residents have such areas proximate to their homes, open space shall also comprise a minimum of thirty-five percent of the gross acreage of an individual SRA Town, Village, or those CRDs exceeding 100 acres. Lands within a SRA greater than one acre with Index values of greater than 1.2 shall be retained as open space. As an incentive to encourage open space, such uses within a SRA, located outside of the ACSC, exceeding the required thirty-five percent shall not be required to consume Stewardship Credits.

**Policy 4.11**

The perimeter of each SRA shall be designed to provide a transition from higher density and intensity uses within the SRA to lower density and intensity uses on adjoining property. The edges of SRAs shall be well defined and designed to be compatible with the character of adjoining property. Techniques such as, but not limited to setbacks, landscape buffers, and recreation/open space placement may be used for this purpose. Where existing agricultural activity adjoins a SRA, the design of the SRA must take this activity into account to allow for the continuation of the agricultural activity and to minimize any conflict between agriculture and

SRA uses.

**Policy 4.12**

Where a SRA adjoins a FSA, HSA, WRA or existing public or private conservation land delineated on the Overlay Map, best management and planning practices shall be applied to minimize adverse impacts to such lands. SRA design shall demonstrate that ground water table draw down or diversion will not adversely impact the adjacent FSA, HSA, WRA or conservation land. Detention and control elevations shall be established to protect such natural areas and be consistent with surrounding land and project control elevations and water tables.

**Policy 4.13**

Open space within or contiguous to a SRA shall be used to provide a buffer between the SRA and any adjoining FSA, HSA, or existing public or private conservation land delineated on the Overlay Map. Open space contiguous to or within 300 feet of the boundary of a FSA, HSA, or existing public or private conservation land may include: natural preserves, lakes, golf courses provided no fairways or other turf areas are allowed within the first 200 feet, passive recreational areas and parks, required yard and set-back areas, and other natural or man-made open space. Along the west boundary of the FSAs and HSAs that comprise Camp Keais Strand, i.e., the area south of Immokalee Road, this open space buffer shall be 500 feet wide and shall preclude golf course fairways and other turf areas within the first 300 feet.

**Policy 4.14**

The SRA must have either direct access to a County collector or arterial road or indirect access via a road provided by the developer that has adequate capacity to accommodate the proposed development in accordance with accepted transportation planning standards. No SRA shall be approved unless the capacity of County collector or arterial road(s) serving the SRA is demonstrated to be adequate in accordance with the Collier County Concurrency Management System in effect at the time of SRA designation. A transportation impact assessment meeting the requirements of Section 2.7.3 of the LDC, or its successor regulation shall be prepared for each proposed SRA to provide the necessary data and analysis.

**Policy 4.15.1**

SRAs are intended to be mixed use and shall be allowed the full range of uses permitted by the Urban Designation of the FLUE, as modified by Policies 4.7, 4.7.1, 4.7.2, 4.7.3, 4.7.4 and Attachment C. An appropriate mix of retail, office, recreational, civic, governmental, and institutional uses will be available to serve the daily needs and community wide needs of residents of the RLSA. Depending on the size, scale, and character of a SRA, such uses may be provided either within the specific SRA, within other SRAs in the RLSA or within the Immokalee Urban Area. By example, each Village or Town shall provide for neighborhood retail/office uses to serve its population as well as appropriate civic and institutional uses, however, the combined population of several Villages and Hamlets may be required to support community scaled retail or office uses in a nearby Town. Standards for the minimum amount of non-residential uses in each category are set forth in Attachment C, and shall be also included in the Stewardship LDC District.

**Policy 4.15.2**

The Board of County Commissioners (BCC) may, as a condition of approval and adoption of an SRA development, require that suitable areas for parks, schools, and other public facilities be set aside, improved, and/or dedicated for public use. When the BCC requires such a set aside for one or more public facilities, the set aside shall be subject to the same provisions of the LDC as are applicable to public facility dedications required as a condition for PUD rezoning.

**Policy 4.15.3**

Applicants for SRA designation shall coordinate with Collier County School Board staff to allow planning to occur to accommodate any impacts to the public schools as a result of the SRA. As a part of the SRA application, the following information shall be provided:

1. Number of residential units by type;
2. An estimate of the number of school-aged children for each type of school impacted (elementary, middle, high school); and
3. The potential for locating a public educational facility or facilities within the SRA, and the size of any sites that may be dedicated, or otherwise made available for a public educational facility.

**Policy 4.16.**

A SRA shall have adequate infrastructure available to serve the proposed development, or such infrastructure must be provided concurrently with the demand. The level of infrastructure provided will depend on the form of SRA development, accepted civil engineering practices, and LDC requirements. The capacity of infrastructure necessary to serve the SRA at build-out must be demonstrated during the SRA designation process. Infrastructure to be analyzed management, and solid waste. Transportation infrastructure is discussed in Policy 4.14. Centralized or decentralized community water and wastewater utilities are required in Towns, Villages, and those CRDs exceeding 100 acres in size. Centralized or decentralized community water and wastewater utilities shall be constructed, owned, operated and maintained by a private utility service, the developer, a Community Development District, the Immokalee Water Sewer Service District, Collier County, or other governmental entity. Innovative alternative water and wastewater treatment systems such as decentralized community treatment systems shall not be prohibited by this policy provided that they meet all applicable regulatory criteria. Individual potable water supply wells and septic systems, limited to a maximum of 100 acres of any Town, Village or CRD of 100 acres are permitted on an interim basis until services from a centralized/decentralized community system are available. Individual potable water supply wells and septic systems are permitted in Hamlets and may be permitted in CRDs of 100 acres or less in size.

**Policy 4.17**

The BCC will review and approve SRA designation applications in accordance with the provisions of Policy 1.1.2 of the Capital Improvement Element of the GMP for Category A public facilities. Final local development orders will be approved within a SRA designated by the BCC in accordance with the Concurrency Management System of the GMP and LDC in effect at the time of final local development order approval.

**Policy 4.18**

The SRA will be planned and designed to be fiscally neutral or positive to Collier County at the horizon year based on a cost/benefit fiscal impact analysis model acceptable to or as may be adopted by the County. The BCC may grant exceptions to this policy to accommodate affordable housing, as it deems appropriate.

Techniques that may promote fiscal neutrality such as Community Development Districts, and other special districts, shall be encouraged. At a minimum, the analysis shall consider the following public facilities and services: transportation, potable water, wastewater, irrigation water, stormwater management, solid waste, parks, law enforcement, and schools. Development phasing, developer contributions and mitigation, and other public/private partnerships shall address any potential adverse impacts to adopted levels of service standards.

**Policy 4.19**

Eight Credits shall be required for each acre of land included in a SRA, except for open space in excess of the required thirty-five percent as described in Policy 4.10 or for land that is designated for a public benefit use described in Policy 4.19. In order to promote compact, mixed use development and provide the necessary support facilities and services to residents

of rural areas, the SRA designation entitles a full range of uses, accessory uses and associated uses that provide a mix of services to and are supportive to the residential population of a SRA, as provided for in Policies 4.7, 4.15 and Attachment C. Such uses shall be identified, located and quantified in the SRA master plan.

**Policy 4.20**

The acreage of a public benefit use shall not count toward the maximum acreage limits described in Policy 4.7. For the purpose of this policy, public benefit uses include: public schools (preK-12) and public or private post secondary institutions, including ancillary uses; community parks exceeding the minimum acreage requirements of Attachment C, municipal golf courses; regional parks; and governmental facilities excluding essential services as defined in the LDC. The location of public schools shall be coordinated with the Collier County School Board, based on the interlocal agreement 163.3177 F.S. and in a manner consistent with 235.193 F.S. Schools and related ancillary uses shall be encouraged to locate in or proximate to Towns, Villages, and Hamlets subject to applicable zoning and permitting requirements.

**Policy 4.21**

Lands within the ACSC that meet all SRA criteria shall also be restricted such that credits used to entitle a SRA in the ACSC must be generated exclusively from SSAs within the ACSC. Further, the only form of SRA allowed in the ACSC east of the Okaloacoochee Slough shall be Hamlets and CRDs of 100 acres or less and the only form of SRA allowed in the ACSC west of the Okaloacoochee Slough shall be Villages and CRDs of not more than 300 acres and Hamlets. Provided, however, that two Villages or CRDs of not more than 500 acres each, exclusive of any lakes created prior to the effective date of this amendment as a result of mining operations, shall be allowed in areas that have a frontage on State Road 29 and that, as of the effective date of these amendments, had been predominantly cleared as a result of Ag Group I or Earth Mining or Processing Uses. This policy

is intended to assure that the RLSA Overlay is not used to increase the development potential within the ACSC but instead is used to promote a more compact form of development as an alternative to the Baseline Standards already allowed within the ACSC. No policy of the RLSA Overlay shall take precedence over the Big Cypress ACSC regulations and all regulations therein shall apply

**Group 5 – Policies that protect water quality and quantity and the maintaining of the natural water regime and protect listed animal and plant species and their habitats on land that is not voluntarily included in the Rural Lands Stewardship Area program.**

**Policy 5.1:**

To protect water quality and quantity and maintenance of the natural water regime in areas mapped as FSAs on the Overlay Map prior to the time that they are designated as SSAs under the Stewardship Credit Program. Residential Uses, General Conditional Uses, Earth Mining and Processing Uses, and Recreational Uses (layers 1-4) as listed in the Matrix shall be eliminated in FSAs. Conditional use essential services and governmental essential services, except those necessary to serve permitted uses or for public safety, shall only be allowed in FSAs with a Natural Resource Stewardship Index value of 1.2 or less. Where practicable, directional-drilling techniques and/or previously cleared or disturbed areas shall be utilized for oil or gas extraction in FSAs in order to minimize impacts to native habitats. Asphaltic and concrete batch making plants shall be prohibited in areas mapped as HSAs. The opportunity to voluntarily participate in the Stewardship Credit Program, as well as the right to sell conservation easements or a free or lesser interest in the land, shall constitute compensation for the loss of these rights.

**Policy 5.2:**

To protect water quality and quantity and maintenance of the natural water regime and to protect listed animal and plant species and their habitats in areas mapped as FSAs, HSAs, and WRAs on the Overlay Map that are within the ACSC, all ACSC regulatory standards shall apply, including those that strictly limit non-agricultural clearing.

**Policy 5.3:**

To protect water quality and quantity and maintenance of the natural water regime and to protect listed animal and plant species and their habitats in areas mapped as FSAs, HSAs, and WRAs on the Overlay Map that are not within the ACSC, if a property owner proposes to utilize such land for a non-agricultural purpose under the Baseline Standards referenced in Policy 1.5 and does not elect to use the Overlay, the following regulations are applicable, shall be incorporated into the LDC, and shall supersede any comparable existing County regulations that would otherwise apply. These regulations shall only apply to non-agricultural use of land prior to its inclusion in the Overlay system:

1. Site clearing and alteration shall be limited to 20% of the property and nonpermeable surfaces shall not exceed 50% of any such area.
2. Except for roads and lakes, any nonpermeable surface greater than one acre shall provide for release of surface water runoff, collected or uncollected, in a manner approximating the natural surface water flow regime of the surrounding area.
3. Revegetation and landscaping of cleared areas shall be accomplished with predominantly native species and planting of undesirable exotic species shall be prohibited.
4. An Environmental Impact Statement shall be prepared by the applicant and reviewed by Collier County in accordance with County regulations.

5. Roads shall be designed to allow the passage of surface water flows through the use of equalizer pipes, interceptor spreader systems or performance equivalent structures.

**Policy 5.4:**

Collier County will coordinate with appropriate State and Federal agencies concerning the provision of wildlife crossings at locations determined to be appropriate.

**Policy 5.5:**

For those lands that are not voluntarily included in the Rural Lands Stewardship program, non-agricultural development, excluding individual single family residences, shall be directed away from the listed species and their habitats by complying with the following guidelines and standards:

1. A wildlife survey shall be required for all parcels when listed species are known to inhabit biological communities similar to those existing on site or where listed species are directly observed on the site. The survey shall be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) guidelines. The County shall notify the FFWCC and USFWS of the existence of any listed species that may be discovered.
2. Wildlife habitat management plans for listed species and for those protected species identified below shall be submitted for County approval. A plan shall be required for all projects where the wildlife survey indicates listed species or the protected species identified below are utilizing the site, or the site contains potential habitat for listed species. These plans shall describe how the project directs incompatible land uses away from listed species and their habitats. Management plans for new preserves shall also outline a public awareness program to educate residents about the on-site preserve and the need to maintain habitat within the preserve for listed species and those protected species identified below.
  - a. Management plans for new preserves shall incorporate proper techniques to protect listed species, and those protected species identified below, and their habitats from the negative impacts of proposed development. Open space and vegetation preservation requirements shall be used to establish buffer areas between wildlife habitat areas and areas dominated by human activities. Provisions such as fencing, walls, or other obstructions shall be provided to minimize development impacts to the wildlife and to facilitate and encourage wildlife to use wildlife corridors. Appropriate roadway crossings, underpasses and signage shall be used where roads must cross wildlife corridors.
    - i. Management guidelines contained in publications used by the FFWCC and USFWS for technical assistance shall be used for developing required management plans.
    - ii. The County shall consider any other techniques recommended by the USFWS and FFWCC, subject to the provision of paragraph 3 of this Policy.

- iii. When listed species are directly observed on site or indicated by evidence, such as denning, foraging, or other indications, a minimum of 40% of native vegetation on site shall be retained, with the exception of clearing for agricultural purposes. The County shall also consider the recommendation of other agencies, subject to the provisions of paragraph 3 of this Policy.
  - b. For parcels containing gopher tortoises (*Gopherus polyphemus*), habitat management plans are required and shall give priority to protecting the largest most contiguous gopher tortoise habitat with the greatest number of active burrows, and for providing a connection to off site adjacent gopher tortoise preserves.
  - c. Habitat preservation plans for the Florida scrub jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) are required and shall provide for a maintenance program and specify appropriate fire or mechanical protocols to maintain the natural scrub community.
  - d. For the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), habitat management plans are required and shall establish protective zones around the eagle nest restricting certain activities. The plans shall also address restricting certain types of activities during the nest season.
  - e. For the red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*), habitat protection plans are required and shall outline measures to avoid adverse impacts to active clusters and to minimize impacts to foraging habitat. Where adverse effects cannot be avoided, measures shall be taken to minimize on-site disturbance and compensate or mitigate for impacts that remain.
  - f. In areas where the Florida black bear (*Ursus americanus floridanus*) may be present, management plans are required and shall require that garbage be placed in bear-resistant containers where such containers are available and accepted for use by Collier County, or containers stored in locations not easily accessible to bears. The management plan shall also identify methods to inform local residents of the concerns related to interaction between black bears and humans.
  - g. For projects located in Priority I or Priority II Panther Habitat areas, management plans are required and shall discourage the destruction of undisturbed, native habitats that are preferred by the Florida panther (*Felis concolor coryi*) by directing intensive land uses to currently disturbed areas. Preferred habitats include pine flatwoods and hardwood hammocks. In turn, these areas shall be buffered from the most intense land uses of the project by using low intensity land uses (e.g., parks, passive recreational areas, golf courses). Golf courses within the Rural Lands Area shall be designed and managed using standards found within this Overlay. The management plans shall identify appropriate lighting controls for these permitted uses and shall also address the opportunity to utilize prescribed burning to maintain fire-adapted preserved vegetation communities and provide browse for white-tailed deer.
  - h. The Management Plans shall contain a monitoring program for developments greater than ten (10) acres.
3. The County shall, consistent with applicable policies of this Overlay, consider and utilize recommendations and letters of technical assistance from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and recommendations from the US Fish and Wildlife Service in issuing development orders on property containing listed species.

It is recognized that these agency recommendations, on a case by case basis, may change the requirements contained within these wildlife protection policies and any such change shall be deemed consistent with the Growth Management Plan.

**Policy 5.6:**

For those lands that are not voluntarily included in the Rural Lands Stewardship program, Collier County shall direct non-agricultural land uses away from high functioning wetlands by limiting direct impacts within wetlands. A direct impact is hereby defined as the dredging or filling of a wetland or adversely changing the hydroperiod of a wetland. This Policy shall be implemented as follows:

1. There are two (2) major wetlands systems within the RLSA, Camp Keais Strand and the Okaloacoochee Slough. These two systems have been mapped and are designated as FSA's. Policy 5.1 prohibits certain uses within the FSA's, thus preserving and protecting the wetlands functions within those wetland systems.
2. The other significant wetlands within the RLSA are WRA's as described in Policy 3.3. These areas are protected by existing SFWMD wetlands permits for each area.
3. FSAs, HSAs and WRAs, as provided in Policy 5.3, and the ACSC have stringent site clearing and alteration limitations, nonpermeable surface limitations, and requirements addressing surface water flows which protect wetland functions within the wetlands in those areas. Other wetlands within the RLSA are isolated or seasonal wetlands. These wetlands will be protected based upon the wetland functionality assessment described below, and the final permitting requirements of the South Florida Water Management District.
  - a. The County shall apply the vegetation retention, open space and site preservation requirements specified within this Overlay to preserve an appropriate amount of native vegetation on site. Wetlands shall be preserved as part of this vegetation requirement according to the following criteria:
    - i. The acreage requirements specified within this Overlay shall be met by preserving wetlands with the highest wetland functionality scores. Wetland functionality assessment scores shall be those described in paragraph (b) of this Policy. The vegetative preservation requirements imposed by Policies 5.3 and 5.5 shall first be met through preservation of wetlands having a functionality assessment score of 0.65 or a Uniform Wetland Mitigation Assessment Method score of 0.7, or greater. The County shall apply specific criteria in the LDC to be used to determine those instances in which wetlands with a WRAP functionality assessment score of 0.65 or a Uniform Wetland Mitigation Assessment Method score of 0.7, or greater must be preserved in excess of the preservation required by Policy 5.3.
    - ii. Wetlands used by listed species or serving as corridors for the movement of listed species shall be preserved on site. Wetland flowway functions through the project shall be maintained.
    - iii. Proposed development shall demonstrate that ground water table

drawdowns or diversions will not adversely change the hydroperiod of preserved wetlands on or offsite. Detention and control elevations shall be set to protect surrounding wetlands and be consistent with surrounding land and project control elevations and water tables. In order to meet these requirements, projects shall be designed in accordance with Sections 10.2.2.4 of the *Environmental Resource Permit Applicant's Handbook Volume I*, and Sections 3.11 and 3.12 of the *Environmental Resource Permit Applicant's Handbook Volume II for use within the Geographic Limits of the South Florida Water Management District* (2014). Upland vegetative communities may be utilized to meet the vegetative, open space and site preservation requirements of this Overlay when the wetland functional assessment score is less than 0.65.

- b. In order to assess the values and functions of wetlands at the time of project review, applicants shall rate functionality of wetlands using the South Florida Water Management District's Wetland Rapid Assessment Procedure (WRAP), as described in Technical Publication Reg-001, dated September 1997, and updated August 1999, or the Uniform Wetland Mitigation Assessment Method, identified as F.A.C. Chapter 62-345. The applicant shall submit to County staff agency-accepted WRAP scores, or Uniform Wetlands Mitigation Assessment scores. County staff shall review this functionality assessment as part of the County's EIS provisions and shall use the results to direct incompatible land uses away from the highest functioning wetlands according to the requirements found in paragraph 3 above.
- c. All direct impacts shall be mitigated for pursuant to the requirements of paragraph (f) of this Policy.
- d. Single family residences shall follow the requirements contained within Policy 6.2.7 of the Conservation and Coastal Management Element.
- e. The County shall separate preserved wetlands from other land uses with appropriate buffering requirements. The County shall require a minimum 50-foot vegetated upland buffer abutting a natural water body, and for other wetlands a minimum 25-foot vegetated upland buffer abutting the wetland. A structural buffer may be used in conjunction with a vegetative buffer that would reduce the vegetative buffer width by 50%. A structural buffer shall be required abutting wetlands where direct impacts are allowed. Wetland buffers shall conform to the following standards:
  - i. The buffer shall be measured landward from the approved jurisdictional line.
  - ii. The buffer zone shall consist of preserved native vegetation. Where native vegetation does not exist, native vegetation compatible with the existing soils and expected hydrologic conditions shall be planted.
  - iii. The buffer shall be maintained free of Category I invasive exotic plants, as defined by the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council.

iv. The following land uses are considered to be compatible with wetland functions and are allowed within the buffer:

(1) Passive recreational areas, boardwalks and recreational shelters;

(2) Pervious nature trails;

(3) Water management structures;

(5) Mitigation areas;