

## **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. 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 Department of Community Affairs 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.