

Conservation and Coastal Management Outline

GOAL

CCM-1 The Village’s unique natural environment consists of wildlife and plant communities, the Estero River and its tributaries leading to the Estero Bay that defines the Village’s western boundary. The Village will support and promote public access to greenway and waterfront areas by residents and visitors in ways that do not compromise the protection of these natural resources.1

OBJECTIVES

CCM-1.1	PRESERVE MANAGEMENT COORDINATION.....	1
CCM-1.2	WATER ACCESS	2
CCM-1.3	COASTAL RESOURCE PROTECTION	2
CCM-1.4	NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION	3
CCM-1.5	PLANT COMMUNITIES.....	4
CCM-1.6	TREE PROTECTION.....	4
CCM-1.7	WILDLIFE.	5
CCM-1.8	WETLANDS	5
CCM-1.9	WATER QUALITY	6
CCM-1.10	WATER RESOURCE PROTECTION.....	7
CCM-1.11	AIR QUALITY	7
CCM-1.12	PLANNING, COORDINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION.....	8

Conservation and Coastal Management Goals, Objectives and Policies

GOAL

CCM-1 The Village’s unique natural environment consists of wildlife and plant communities, the Estero River and its tributaries leading to the Estero Bay that defines the Village’s western boundary. The Village will support and promote public access to greenway and waterfront areas by residents and visitors in ways that do not compromise the protection of these natural resources. **(note: The definition of greenway is a trail that is outside a vehicular right-of-way, usually in a natural setting.)**

OBJECTIVE

CCM-1.1 PRESERVE MANAGEMENT COORDINATION. The Village has thousands of acres of public and private natural areas that are protected as state parks, public lands, or private preserve areas. These areas offer tremendous ecological, environmental, recreational and community benefits to the Village. The Village will collaborate with public agencies and private developers to preserve and maintain interconnected natural areas to benefit citizens and visitors.

POLICIES

CCM-1.1.1 The Village shall develop and maintain an inventory of public and private parks and conservation areas and other natural areas existing within the Village boundaries.

CCM-1.1.2 Collaborate with public and private land managers to create interconnections between existing and future parks and preserve areas.

CCM-1.1.3 Encourage public-private partnerships that foster the responsible use and enjoyment of parks and preserve areas.

CCM-1.1.4 Encourage responsible land management techniques for public and private natural areas and parks designed to mimic natural Florida ecosystems, increase biodiversity of beneficial native plant species, and reduce fuel load and the potential for catastrophic wildfires.

CCM-1.1.5 The Village shall facilitate the cooperation of public and private land managers to reduce cost and increase effectiveness of the management of natural areas.

CCM-1.1.6 *(cross reference INF-1.6.3)* The Village shall seek to ensure that private developments perform maintenance and protect landscaping, drainage systems and preservation areas in accordance with applicable standards in the land development code and applicable permit conditions.

- A. General trees, buffer trees and plantings that are required as part of development orders should be maintained in a healthy condition. Any change to established general trees, buffer trees and plantings that are required as part of development orders shall be governed by standards and procedures outlined in the land development code that relate to vegetation removal permit requirements and a replacement plans subject to Village approval.

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- B. Preserves or conservation lands that are required as part of development orders should be maintained in a healthy and exotic free condition. Any vegetation removal or impacts associated with an area designated as a preserve or conservation is limited per the applicable standards in the land development code and applicable permit conditions.
- C. Any vegetation removal proposed on wooded or otherwise undeveloped sites is discouraged. Where necessary, vegetation removal shall be governed by standards and procedures outlined in the land development code.

OBJECTIVE

CCM-1.2 WATER ACCESS. Support efforts to develop, regulate and implement programs to counter negative impacts on water from recreational, marine, and development issues while providing public access and supporting the viability of the Calusa Blueway. (Note: some intent from Lee Plan Policy 33.2.7)

POLICIES

CCM-1.2.1 Discourage new public access to the Estero River for motorized watercraft while encouraging new public access to the river for non-motorized and electric watercraft.

CCM-1.2.2 The Village will cooperate to the extent practicable with the City of Bonita Springs and Lee County to provide public access to Estero Bay.

CCM-1.2.3 Evaluate feasibility of a scenic waterways program in order to enhance the opportunities for physical, visual, and interpretive access to the water. (Note: Lee Plan Objective 125.1)

CCM-1.2.4 Encourage private landowners along the Estero River to provide some form of water access to the public. (Note: Lee Plan Objective 125.2)

OBJECTIVE

CCM-1.3 COASTAL RESOURCE PROTECTION. The Village will adopt development and redevelopment principles and strategies that reduce the risk of flooding, storm surge, and impacts of sea level rise.

POLICIES

CCM-1.3.1 Public expenditures in areas particularly subject to repeated destruction by hurricanes will be limited to necessary repairs, public safety needs, services to existing residents, and recreation and open space uses. (Note: Lee Plan Objective 106.1)

CCM-1.3.2 Conserve and enhance the natural functions of environmentally critical coastal areas. (Note: Lee Plan Objective 104.1)

CCM-1.3.3 Continue to encourage the construction of environmentally compatible shoreline stabilizing systems where stabilizing systems are needed. (Note: Lee Plan Objective 113.2)

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CCM-1.3.4 Support efforts to maintain the ecosystem that nourishes and shelters the commercial and sport fisheries surface waters adjacent to the Village. (Note: Lee Plan Goal 121)

CCM-1.3.5 The Village shall review the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity’s “Community Resiliency Initiative: Planning for Adaptation to Sea Level Rise,” and the “Lee County Climate Change Resiliency Strategy” (CCRS) as well as other state and federal planning resources, as part of its efforts to establish effective strategies to plan for and adapt to sea level rise. In examining the statewide planning framework, the Village can better determine how best to integrate sea level rise adaptation policies into existing processes.

CCM-1.3.6 The Coastal High Hazard Area, shall be defined as stated in Florida Statutes Chapter 163, as the areas below the elevation of the category 1 storm surge line as established by a Sea, Lake, and Overland Surges from Hurricanes (SLOSH) computerized storm surge model, as described in Florida Statutes 163.3178(2)(h). The area defined should be based upon the most recently available data published by the Florida division of emergency management.

CCM-1.3.7 Critical evacuation roadway links shall receive high priority for maintenance and capital improvement expenditures.

CCM-1.3.8 Continue to regulate and encourage proper coastal management techniques through site plan review and zoning mechanisms.

CCM-1.3.9 Implement development and redevelopment engineering solutions and standards that reduce the flood risk in coastal areas.

OBJECTIVE

CCM-1.4 NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION. Protect **wetland and upland ecosystems so as to maintain and enhance native habitats, floral and faunal species diversity, water quality, and natural surface water** resources. (Note: Lee Plan Goal 107)

POLICIES

CCM-1.4.1 Ensure **the long-term protection and enhancement of the natural upland and wetland habitats through the retention of interconnected, functioning, and maintainable hydroecological systems where the remaining wetlands and uplands function as a productive unit resembling the original landscape.** (Note: Lee Plan Objective 107.1)

CCM-1.4.2 Conserve critical habitat of rare and endangered plant and animal species through development review, regulation, incentives, and acquisition. (Note: Lee Plan Policy 16.5.3)

CCM-1.4.3 Continue implementing regulations and incentives to prevent incompatible development in and around environmentally sensitive lands. (Note: Lee Plan Policy 107.2.2)

CCM-1.4.4 Prevent water management and development projects from altering or disrupting the natural function of significant natural systems. (Note: Lee Plan Policy 107.2.3)

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CCM-1.4.5 The Village attaches great importance to the integrity of the Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource Area (DR/GR) in so far as actions in the DR/GR area have an impact on the environment, natural resources, mobility, sense of place, and character of Estero. (Note: Village Center Amendment Policy 19.5.4) The Village shall advocate to discourage development or future land use changes of DR/GR designated lands if the proposed development or future land use change has potential to increase density, intensity or traffic within the Village. (Note: Lee Plan Goal 10 and Policy 10.5)

OBJECTIVE

CCM-1.5 PLANT COMMUNITIES. Preserve and protect the inherent integrity of the Village’s natural plant communities. (Note: Lee Plan Objective 107.2)

POLICIES

CCM-1.5.1 Develop and maintain an inventory of upland habitats that, due to their uniqueness or importance to the Village, should be retained in their natural state and incorporated as amenities into the design of new developments.

CCM-1.5.2 Retain and preserve high-value upland and wetland habitat types that are unique, rare, or otherwise important to the Village.

CCM-1.5.3 Encourage the preservation of wetland and upland habitats that are contiguous to other public or private natural areas along with the hydrologic interconnection between such preserve areas.

CCM-1.5.4 Require environmental inventories and assessments of the impacts of development and encourage the protection and maintenance of viable tracts of sensitive or high-quality natural plant communities within developments. (Note: Lee Plan Policy 107.2.4)

CCM-1.5.5 Maintain regulations to control the clearing of natural vegetation, including tree removal and clearing of understory, prior to the development of property or its conversion to agricultural uses. (Note: Lee Plan Policy 107.2.5)

CCM-1.5.6 Development adjacent to aquatic and other nature preserves, wildlife refuges, and recreation areas must protect the natural character and public benefit of these areas including, but not limited to, scenic values for the benefit of future generations. (Note: Lee Plan Policy 107.2.10)

OBJECTIVE

CCM-1.6 TREE PROTECTION. Protect heritage trees, historic trees and champion trees as unique community resources.

POLICIES

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CCM-1.6.1 The Village shall develop and maintain an inventory of specimen trees that, due to their uniqueness or importance to the Village, should be retained in their natural state and incorporated as amenities into the design of new developments.

CCM-1.6.2 Evaluate the Land Development Code for opportunities to strengthen mechanisms for the protection of trees associated with any development or redevelopment.

OBJECTIVE

CCM-1.7 WILDLIFE. The Village shall maintain and enhance fish and wildlife diversity and distribution for the benefit of a balanced ecological system. (Note: Lee Plan Objective 107.3)

POLICIES

CCM-1.7.1 Support protecting habitats of endangered and threatened species and species of special concern including but not limited to southern bald eagles, west Indian manatees, gopher tortoises, red-cockaded woodpecker, woodstork, Florida panther and black bear, smalltooth sawfish, bonneted bat **in order to maintain or enhance existing population numbers and distributions of those species.** (Note: Lee Plan Objective 107.4)

CCM-1.7.2 Participate with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission **in the development of a regional plan that identifies and protects areas utilized by wildlife, including panthers and bears, so as to promote the continued viability and diversity of regional species.** (Note: Lee Plan Policy 107.3.2)

OBJECTIVE

CCM-1.8 WETLANDS. The Village recognizes that wetlands are an invaluable natural resource which contribute vital benefits for the public, wildlife, ecosystems and the environment and **will maintain and enforce a regulatory program for development in wetlands that is cost-effective, complements federal and state permitting processes, and protects the fragile ecological characteristics of wetland systems.** (Note: Lee Plan Goal 114)

POLICIES

CCM-1.8.1 The natural functions of wetlands and wetland systems will be protected and conserved through the enforcement of the Village’s and the State of Florida’s wetland protection regulations and the goals, objectives, and policies in this plan at a minimum. (Note: Lee Plan Objective 114.1)

CCM-1.8.2 The Village will require wetland mitigation for wetlands impacted by development or construction within the Village to be mitigated in order of preference: 1) On the same site or downstream of the impact within the same watershed; 2) within Estero; and 3) as close geographically to Estero as possible but still within the Estero Bay watershed. The Village will coordinate with South Florida Water Management District, Lee County, and the US Army Corps of Engineers to determine the nature and level of mitigation on a case-by-case basis.

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CCM-1.8.3 Encourage upland preservation in and around preserved wetlands to provide habitat diversity, enhance edge effect, and promote wildlife conservation. (Note: Lee Plan Policy 107.3.1)

OBJECTIVE

CCM-1.9 WATER QUALITY. The Village shall coordinate with County, state and federal agencies to manage the quality of the Village’s surface waters with priority on the Estero Bay ecosystem so as to maintain or improve water quality and wildlife diversity; to reduce or maintain current pollution loading and system imbalances in order to conserve estuarine productivity; and to provide the best use of estuarine areas. (Note: Lee Plan Goal 108)

POLICIES

CCM-1.9.1 The Village shall review, evaluate, and work cooperatively with applicable local, and state, and federal agencies to address all new upland developments in terms of their impacts on estuarine systems. (Note: Lee Plan Objective 108.2)

CCM-1.9.2 The Village will work to ensure new development will maximize stormwater retention and treatment. (Note: Lee Plan Objective 108.2)

CCM-1.9.3 New development must not degrade water quality of surface waters or groundwater.

CCM-1.9.4 (Cross reference: INF-1.3.9) It is hereby declared that in the interests of preserving public health and of preserving and enhancing environmental quality, it is in the public interest to abate and cease use of septic tanks and wastewater treatment package plants where and when central sewer is available. The Village will identify the existing inventory of septic tanks in the Village, evaluate water quality issues associated with them, and coordinate with property owners, local utility providers and Florida Department of Environmental Protection to develop a program, schedule and funding to convert from septic tank use to central sewer facilities. (Note: Lee Plan Policy 56.2.1)

CCM-1.9.5 (Cross reference: INF-1.3.10) With the cooperation of the respective utility firms or agencies, the Village will coordinate as needed on programs for the abatement of septic tanks and package plants in areas in which sewer is presently available and in areas encompassed by assessment districts established for upgrading sewer availability. (Note: Lee Plan Policy 56.2.2) **CCM-1.9.6** Through education, incentives, and standards in the Land Development Code, encourage residents, owner associations, and golf courses to utilize responsible fertilizer practices designed and implemented specifically to reduce nutrient runoff into wetlands and waterways.

OBJECTIVE

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CCM-1.10 WATER RESOURCE PROTECTION. Support Lee County and Bonita Springs Utilities efforts to provide continued water resource availability.

POLICIES

CCM-1.10.1 Work with Lee County and utility providers to identify water needs consistent with projections of human population and the needs of natural systems in order to determine the future demands for groundwater. The Village will support appropriate measures to ensure water supplies of sufficient quantity and quality to meet the present and projected demands of all consumers and the environment, based on the capacity of the natural systems.

CCM-1.10.2 Cooperate with emergency water conservation measures of the South Florida Water Management District. (Note: Lee Plan Policy 117.1.7)

CCM-1.10.3 Develop and implement a Water Supply Facilities Work Plan, as required by the State of Florida. The Village shall use the document as the Village’s guide to water supply facility planning with a minimum planning horizon as specified by the State of Florida. A copy of the adopted Water Supply Facilities Work Plan will be maintained and kept on file by the Village. (Note: Lee Plan Policy 55.1.3)

CCM-1.10.4 Promote Florida Friendly and xeriscape landscaping techniques in the Land Development Code and will provide education on water conservation through creative landscaping, and promote the conservation and use of native plant species through xeriscape landscaping techniques on Village projects. (Note: Intent of Lee Plan Objective 117.2)

CCM-1.10.5 Maintain compliance with the Village ordinance to ban well stimulation treatments in Estero, including acid stimulation and hydraulic and acid fracturing, or “fracking.”

CCM-1.10.6 Support and comply with Lee County’s wellfield protection ordinance protecting the quality of water flowing into potable water wellfields. (Note: Lee Plan Objective 63.1)

OBJECTIVE

CCM-1.11 AIR QUALITY. Maintain the best possible air quality, meeting or exceeding state and federal air quality standards. (Note: Lee Plan Goal 118)

POLICIES

CCM-1.11.1 Encourage the use of bio diesel, electricity and other clean fuels in public vehicles, and consider implementing incentives in the land development code for dedicated parking for such vehicles in new developments and redevelopments. (Note: Lee Plan Policy 118.1.4)

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CCM-1.12 PLANNING, COORDINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION. The Village will adopt and coordinate on the implementation of Lee County’s emergency plans and programs designed to protect the public from natural and technological hazards.

POLICIES

CCM-1.12.1 Address disaster preparedness, response and recovery and mitigation by coordinating with and participating in the Lee County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, Post-Disaster Strategic Plan, and Flood Plain Management Ordinance.

CCM-1.12.2 In the event of a disaster, the Village shall cooperate with Lee County to assist people with special needs (those who are elderly, frail, infirm, or handicapped) during an emergency.

CCM-1.12.3 The Village shall adhere to Lee County’s hazardous material emergency responses plan and will coordinate with the Estero Fire District on the provision of **notification, resource, and logistical support to the response team and other primary agencies responding to hazardous material incidents to ensure proper containment, cleanup and disposal of hazardous materials involved in an emergency incident.** (Note: Lee Plan Policy 103.1.2)

CCM-1.12.4 Adhere to Lee County Emergency Evacuation procedures and guidelines to ensure provision of evacuation and shelter capabilities adequate to safeguard the public against the effects of hurricanes and tropical storms. (Note: Lee Plan Goal 109)

CCM-1.12.5 Coordinate with Lee County and Estero Fire District to provide planning and decision-making to guide redevelopment during the response and recovery period following major emergencies, such as tropical storms and hurricanes. (Note: Lee Plan Goal 111)

CCM-1.12.6 The Village acknowledges that wildfires present a threat to life and property. State parks, public lands, and private preserve areas increase in flammable fuel loads each year and can be ignited by natural and human-induced causes. Through public education efforts, cooperation with state park rangers, review of preserve management plans the Village will promote wildfire defense and resilience strategies of Fire Wise Communities to decrease the risk of damages associated with catastrophic wildfires while increasing the usability and enjoyment of natural areas.