

From Highlands Council Regional Master Plan Final Draft

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The Highlands Council has developed three primary overlay zones (the Protection Zone, Conservation Zone and Existing Community Zone) and three sub-zones (**Conservation Zone – Environmentally Constrained**, **Existing Community Zone – Environmentally Constrained** and **Lake Community**) each with their own purpose, application, and development criteria- see figure *Land Use Capability Zone Map*. These zones apply within both the Preservation and Planning Areas, though at times with distinct policies and standards in compliance with Highlands Act requirements. The Highlands Council used a 75 acre minimum mapping threshold for the delineation of the three primary overlay zones.

These “Zones” distinguish between resource constrained lands, where development will be limited (Protection Zone), and those lands characterized by existing patterns of human development where, dependent on land or capacity constraints, additional growth may or may not be appropriate (Existing Community Zone). The Conservation Zone identifies those areas with a high concentration of agricultural lands and associated woodlands and environmental features, where development potential may be limited based on the limitations of available infrastructure to support development, e.g. water availability, the existence of concentrated environmental resources that are easily impaired by development, or the protection of important agricultural resources.

In addition to these three primary overlay zones, three sub-zones within the Conservation Zone and the Existing Community Zone have been identified. These constrained areas recognize regionally significant sensitive environmental features where development should be subject to limitations on resource protection, consumptive and depletive water use, and degradation of water quality. The constrained areas do not represent all environmental constraints, and additional environmental restrictions may apply during site planning.

The **Protection Zone** consists of high natural resource value lands that are important to maintaining water quality, water quantity and sensitive ecological resources and processes. Land acquisition is a high priority in the Protection Zone and development activities will be extremely limited; any development will be subject to stringent limitations on consumptive and depletive water use, degradation of water quality, and impacts to environmentally sensitive lands.

The **Conservation Zone** consists of areas with significant agricultural lands and interspersed with associated woodlands and environmental features that should be preserved when possible. Non-agricultural development activities will be limited in area and intensity due to infrastructure constraints and resource protection goals.

The **Conservation Zone – Environmentally Constrained Sub-Zone** consists of significant environmental features within the Conservation Zone that should be preserved and protected from non-agricultural development. Development activities will be limited and subject to stringent limitations on consumptive and depletive water use, degradation of water quality, and impacts to environmentally sensitive lands.

The **Existing Community Zone** consists of areas with regionally significant concentrated development signifying existing communities. These areas tend to have limited environmental constraints due to previous development patterns, and may have existing infrastructure that can support development and redevelopment provided that such development is compatible with the protection and character of the Highlands environment, at levels that are appropriate to maintain the character of established communities.

The **Existing Community Zone – Environmentally Constrained Sub-Zone** consists of significant contiguous critical habitat, steep slopes and forested lands within the Existing Community Zone that should be protected from further fragmentation. They serve as regional habitat “stepping stones” to larger contiguous critical habitat and forested areas. As such, they are not appropriate for significant development, and are best served by land preservation and protection. Development is subject to stringent limitations on consumptive and depletive water use, degradation of water quality, and impacts to environmentally sensitive lands.

The **Lake Community Sub-Zone** consists of patterns of community development that are within the Existing Community Zone within 1,000 feet of lakes. The Highlands Council focused on lakes that are 10 acres or greater and delineated lake management areas consisting of an area of up to 1,000 feet (depending on the protection focus) from the lake shoreline in order to protect water quality, resource features, shoreline development recreation, scenic quality and community character. A future management area is planned, encompassing the full lake watershed, for protection of the lake water quality. This zone has unique policies to prevent degradation of water quality and watershed pollution, harm to lake ecosystems, and promote natural aesthetic values within the Existing Community Zone.

