

Rural Environment

Statement of Intent

The objective of designating a Rural Environment is to protect agricultural land from urban expansion, restrict intensive development along undeveloped shorelines, function as a buffer between urban areas, and maintain open spaces and opportunities for recreational and other uses compatible with agricultural activities.

Designation Criteria

Areas to be designated in the Rural Environment should possess one or more of the following criteria:

1. Areas characterized by recreational or intensive agricultural uses.
2. Areas possessing high capability to support active agricultural practices or intensive recreational development.
3. Areas modified from their natural vegetative cover and surface drainage patterns but generally having low-density development.
4. Areas where residential development is or should be low density because of physical limitations, utility capabilities, access and compatibility with other uses.
5. Areas designated in officially adopted park and recreation plans for medium to high-intensity recreational use.
6. Areas of undeveloped land not appropriate for Natural, Conservancy Suburban or Urban Environment designation.
7. Areas which form buffer zones between urban areas.
8. Areas having valuable sand, gravel and mineral deposits.
9. Areas located in the estuarine and pastoral zones, and in certain limited instances the floodplains of the County's river system.

Management Policies

1. Protect prime agricultural lands from incompatible and preemptive patterns of development.
2. Restrict intensive development along undeveloped rural environment shorelines.
3. Permit opportunities for recreational uses compatible with agricultural activities.
4. Maintain existing and potential areas having a high capability to support intensive agricultural uses for present and future agricultural needs.
5. Require new developments in Rural Environments to reflect the character of the surrounding area by limiting residential density, providing permanent open space, and by maintaining adequate building setbacks from the water to prevent shoreline resources from being destroyed for other rural types of uses.
6. Permit public and private recreation facilities which can be located and designed to minimize conflicts with agricultural activities. Examples of such facilities include linear water access, trail systems and boat launching sites.
7. Encourage farm management practices which will minimize erosion and the flow of waste material into water courses.
8. Restrict industrial and commercial development in the Rural Environment.
9. Prohibit industrial, commercial (except farm produce sales) and extensive residential development on prime agricultural lands except where due to inadequate size, physical barriers or poor access, isolated parcels exist which are not practical or feasible to farm. In these cases, allow development compatible with the Rural Environment.
10. Restrict the density of residential development in the Rural Environment except in those limited areas which are suitable for recreational housing.
11. Provide for sand, gravel and mineral extraction in suitable areas which are not designated as prime agricultural land.

12. Allow beach enrichment projects when it can be shown that other portions of the shoreline will not be adversely affected.