

# Growing Smart: Natural and Cultural Resources in Houston County Communities

## *Environmental Planning Criteria*

### **Water Supply Watersheds**

- N/A

### **Wetlands**

- Most wetlands in Houston County are located along the Ocmulgee River and the major creeks and streams including Echeconnee Creek, Bay Gall Creek, Big Indian Creek, Big Grocery Creek, Flat Creek, Limestone Creek, Mossy Creek, Bay Creek, and Horse Creek.
- An extensive wetland area near Robins Air Force Base, which comes out of Bond Swamp in Bibb and Twiggs Counties, provides an insulating barrier to incompatible development in the vicinity of the Base, thus preserving mission capability.
- A large portion of rural Houston County, south of Perry, is within wetland areas.
- There are isolated wetlands north of Highway 127.
- All communities in Houston County have adopted a Water Resource Ordinance that includes Wetlands Protection as required by the DNR Rules for Part V Environmental Protection

### **Groundwater Recharge Areas**

- Three major aquifers of groundwater recharge areas are located in Houston County.
- The Crataceous-Tertiary aquifer occupies most of the land north of Highway 127 to the Echeconnee Creek.
- The Claborne aquifer covers a small area south of Perry.
- The Floridian-Jacksonian aquifer includes the remaining area in southern Houston County.

- These underground reservoirs provide the water supply for Houston County, and their protection is critical to the health and well being of the County.
- The three levels of pollution susceptibility (the vulnerability of an aquifer to being polluted from spills, discharges, leaks, impoundments, applications of chemicals, injections and other human activities in the recharge area) for these groundwater recharge areas are: low, medium and high.
- With the exception of the area around Perry, Highway 341 and Highway 26, which has medium or average pollution susceptibility, the remainder of Houston County has high pollution susceptibility.
- Each local government in Houston County has adopted a Water Resource Ordinance that includes Groundwater Recharge Area Protection as part of DNR Rules for Part V Environmental Criteria.
- This has significant ramifications for Houston County since most of the existing and projected growth areas do not have accessibility to public sewer at the present time. All new development in these areas, therefore, must be connected to septic tank and be covered under the requirements of the Groundwater Recharge Area Protection Ordinance.

### **Protected River Corridors**

- The Ocmulgee River is the sole protected river in Houston County.
- As required by DNR Rules for Part V Environmental Criteria, Houston County has adopted a Water Resource Ordinance that protects this corridor.

### **Protected Mountains**

- N/A

### ***Other Environmentally Sensitive Areas***

### **Public Water Supply Sources**

- The source of the public water supply in Houston County is the underground aquifers. Each of the communities in Houston County has a series of wells that have been constructed to force the water from the aquifers to the surface where it is then treated and distributed through a series of mains.

### **Steep Slopes**

- Steep slopes are present in Houston County along the Echeconnee Creek and Ocmulgee River, the extreme southern portion of the county, and an area north of Highway 127 West.

### **Coastal Resources**

- N/A

### **Floodplains**

- The floodplains in Houston County can be found along the Ocmulgee River and the major creeks.
- Development should be restricted in these areas to prevent structural damage and to reduce flooding conditions downstream.
- Floodplains provide this fast-growing urban area with excellent opportunities for conservation and passive recreation areas and much needed open space.
- The Water Resource Ordinance recently adopted by Houston County and the three cities include flood damage prevention requirements.

### **Soils**

- With the exception of the areas near the Ocmulgee River and the major streams where the soils are not conducive to urban development, the soils for the remainder of Houston County are for the most part suitable for most types of urban development.

### **Plants and Animal Habitats**

- The Georgia Department of Natural Resources-Wildlife Resources Division has identified four animal and eight plant species on the “Special Concern” list for Houston County. Of these species, the Harper’s Heartleaf and the Ocmulgee Skullcap are on the Georgia Protected Species List, and the Relict Trillium is on the U.S. Protected Species List.

### **Other Significant Sensitive Areas**

- N/A

## ***Significant Natural Resources***

### **Scenic Areas**

- There are three scenic areas that have been identified in Houston County: Ocmulgee River Corridor, Highway 341, and Highway 96.

### **Prime Agricultural Land**

- Prime agricultural land, as identified based on soil types, that is located in Houston County includes these areas: east and west of Perry along Highway 127, an area along Dunbar Road in the northern portion of the county, and in the extreme southern portion of the county.

### **Prime Forest Land**

- The areas along the Ocmulgee River, Echeconnee Creek, and to the south of Perry are considered to be locations of prime forest land in Houston County.

## **Major Park and Recreation Areas**

- The Oaky Woods Wildlife Management Area, located in the southeastern portion of the county, is the county's only major park and recreation area.
- Oaky Woods offers excellent passive recreation accommodations, including year-round camping, pre-season scouting, hiking, picnicking, and canoeing. Horseback riding and bicycling is allowed but restricted to open, improved roads and designated trails.
- Over 86 percent of Oaky Woods was leased property from Weyerhaeuser, who has recently sold their timber interests to private developers. These developers have plans to use the property for residential and commercial purposes.
- Initial work has begun on a state park south of the Georgia National Fairgrounds and Agricenter in Perry.
- A coordinated attempt is being made by the Cities of Centerville, Warner Robins, and Houston County to establish a greenway and trail system along Bay Gull Creek. Phase I has been completed, with Phases II and III expected to be constructed within the next five years.

## **Air Quality**

- Houston County and the Cities of Centerville, Perry, and Warner Robins have become part of the Middle Georgia Clean Air Coalition which was formed in 2004 to establish effective regional air quality solutions and to protect the mission of Robins Air Force Base.

## **Water Quality**

- Listed below are the streams in Houston County that are impaired and do not meet state water quality standards:

### Streams in the WRATS Study Area on the Final 2004 303 (d) List

Waterbody Name	Location	Basin	Water Use Classification	Criterion Violated	Violation Designation (Partially or Non-Supporting Use)
Big Grocery Creek	Headwaters to Ocmulgee River (Houston Co.)	Ocmulgee	Fishing	Biota	Partially Supporting
Big Indian Creek	Mossy Creek to Ocmulgee River (Houston Co.)	Ocmulgee	Fishing	Fecal Coliform	Partially Supporting
Flat Creek	0.4 mi. u/s of US Hwy 41 to Big Indian Creek (Houston Co.)	Ocmulgee	Fishing	Biota	Partially Supporting
Limestone Creek	Okeetuck Creek to Big Indian Creek (Houston Co.)	Ocmulgee	Fishing	Biota	Partially Supporting
Mossy Creek	Mule Creek to Lake Joy (Peach/Houston Co.)	Ocmulgee	Fishing	Biota	Partially Supporting
Ocmulgee River	Echeconnee Creek to Sandy Run Creek (Twiggs/Houston Co.)	Ocmulgee	Fishing	Fish Consumption Guidelines	Partially Supporting
Ocmulgee River	Sandy Run Creek to Big Indian Creek (Houston/Twiggs/Bleckley Co.)	Ocmulgee	Fishing	Fecal Coliform	Partially Supporting
Bay Creek	Headwaters to Beaver Creek (Peach/Houston Co.)	Ocmulgee	Fishing	Biota, Fecal Coliform	Not Supporting
Horse Creek	Headwaters to Ocmulgee River, Warner Robins (Houston Co.)	Ocmulgee	Fishing	Dissolved Oxygen, pH	Not Supporting

### *Significant Cultural Resources*

#### **Historic Landmarks**

- Three properties in Houston County have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places: Davis-Felton Plantation, Log Dogtrot House, and New Perry Hotel.
- An historic resources survey report, prepared for the City of Perry, identified 75 structures as “appear to be” or “may be” eligible for inclusion on the National Register. Six districts were identified for possible NR designation.

- Other significant historic structures, districts, or places in Houston County include: Old Warner Robins Train Depot (NR Nomination pending), Elberta Depot, Daniel's Country Store, The Manor Housing District, Commercial Circle, Old Thomas Elementary (currently Macon State College branch), Bonaire, Elberta, Elko, and Kathleen.

### **Cultural Landmarks**

- Several significant cultural landmarks have been identified in Houston County. They are: Museum of Aviation, Mossy Creek Festival, and Georgia National Fairgrounds and Agricenter.

### **Archeological Landmarks**

- The State Archaeological Database identifies 11 sites that are National Register quality sites in Houston County.
- All but one of these sites is located in the Southeastern Ecological Framework areas proposed for land conservation.
- Most of these sites (7) are located in Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas.
- This list is intended to be a starting point for discussions between the local governments and the DNR's Historic Preservation Division to obtain additional guidance on site and area selections that will include archaeological sites for the local community green space plan.

