

# Public Access

Access is important to ensure that sufficient opportunity exists for the public to enjoy this natural resource that is being restored at considerable public expense. It is also important for developing an eco-tourism industry centered upon enjoyment and use of the lake.

A number of public access points currently exist around the lake. Given the lack of use of the lake, they seem more than sufficient to satisfy current demand. To assess future demand, a series of five public involvement workshops were held at different locations around the basin. The majority of workshops participants thought greater access to the lake would be needed as the restoration process began to show demonstrable results. They noted that future access would be most desirable through development of an integrated park system. Suggested activities at these parks included fishing docks, boat docks, campgrounds, picnic areas, swimming areas, and foot trails/walkways that enable visual access to the lake.

The following were listed by the workshop participants as desirable future sites:

## LAKE COUNTY WATER AUTHORITY

Located on the western shore of Lake Apopka, the Lake County Water Authority has been given mitigation funding for purchase of 1096 acres of wetland and upland that adjoins the Water Management District property to the north. Part of this property has producing groves. The upland portions of the property require restoration and could include a park system of nature trails and possibly an access point to the lake.

## PINE ISLAND

Located on the southwestern shore of Lake Apopka, Pine Island has significant opportunities for access on the property. The site is a 1,475-acre parcel and contains mostly uplands and wooded wetlands with direct access to the lake.

## COCA-COLA PROPERTY

Located on the eastern shore of the Lake, the Coca-Cola property offers 300 acres of wetland and upland property with direct access to the lake and adjoins the Crown Point property to the north. The City of Ocoee plans to purchase this site,

restore and preserve the existing wetland system, and develop passive and active recreation areas, including a spur to the West Orange Trail and possibly a public school.

## CROWN POINT

Located on the Lake's eastern shore Crown Point is a future opportunity with approximately 200 vacant acres of a pristine mixture of wetland and uplands along the shore. The site has direct access to Lake Apopka. The City of Ocoee has plans to purchase the parcel for preservation, restoration and passive recreation through the use of mitigation funding dollars from the Western Beltway.

## MAGNOLIA PARK EXTENSION

Magnolia Park is located on the Lake's northeastern shore. Orange County is working to acquire woods adjacent to the north and south of the park. This would add 26 acres to the park, some of which will have direct access to the lake.

## LAUGHLIN ROAD

Located on the basin's north section in Zellwood, Laughlin Road is a 10-acre parcel at the end of Laughlin Road that is zoned for industrial park district use. This site would not have direct access to Lake Apopka but would be connected to the shallow water zone that may be used as bird habitat. Passive recreation would be ideal for this site.

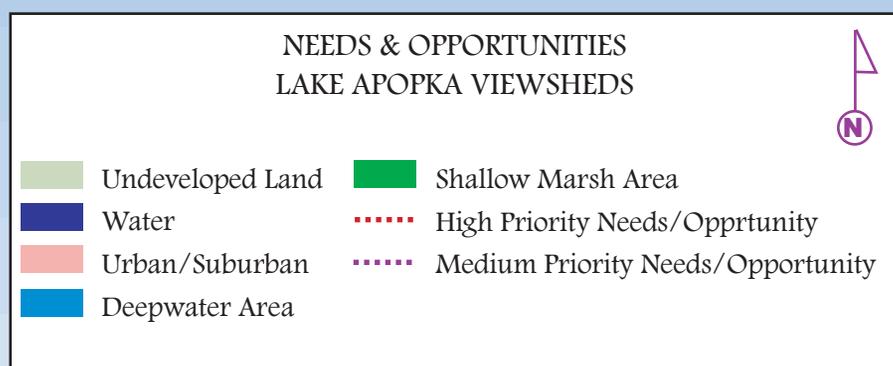
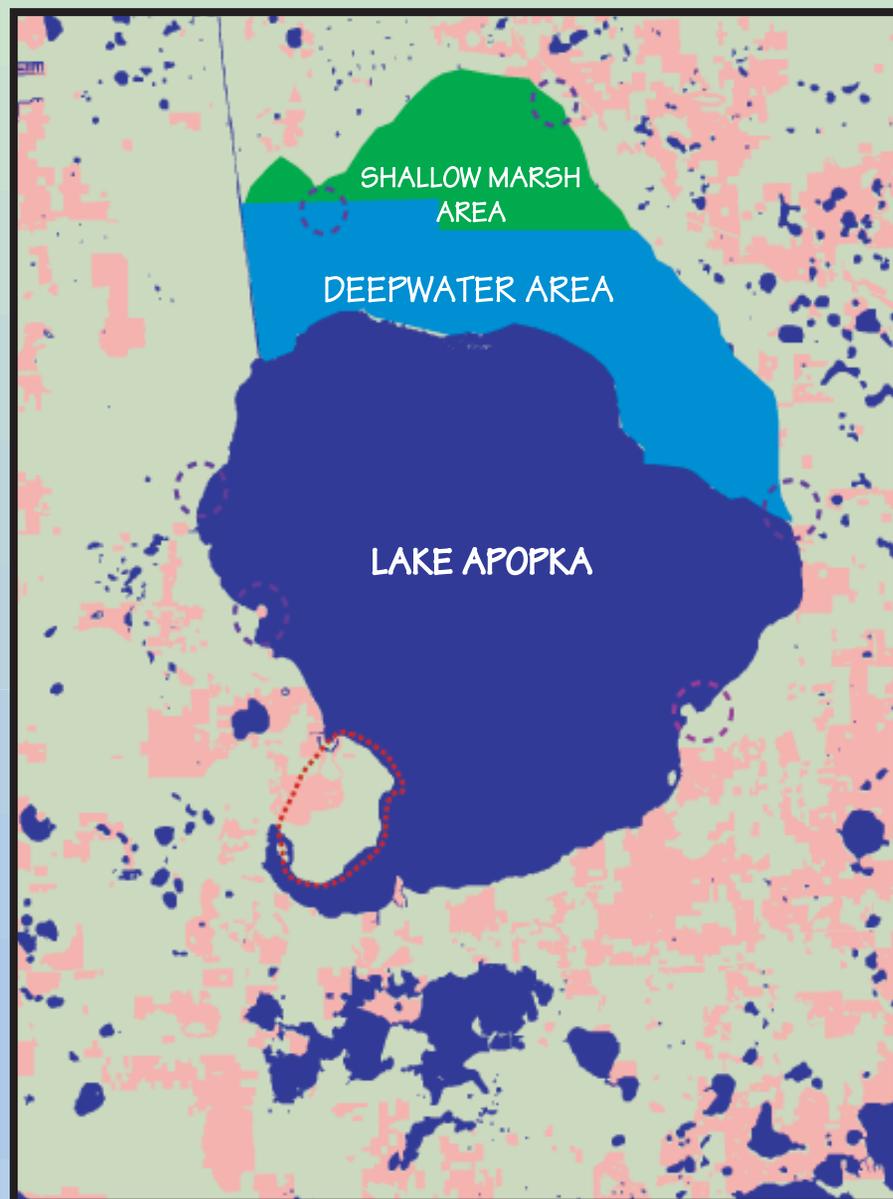
## HOOPER FARMS

Located on what will become Lake Apopka's new northeastern shore, the Hooper Farms area is approximately 19 acres and is currently being used as a burrow pit. This site abuts the St Johns River Water Management District property that is to be flooded and will have direct access

## RESTORATION AREA

The Water Management District's lands offer substantial opportunity for public access to the lake. The District shows a boat launching facility as part of their plans for the restoration area, although that plan is subject to change as the management plan is developed.

All of these areas have the potential to help meet future access needs and offer



opportunities for dispersing sites around the basin. Of all these sites, however, Pine Island offers the greatest opportunity for providing public access that could be developed in conjunction with many other outdoor recreational activities, as identified at the public workshops.

**hooper farms**

 **Laughlin Road**

**PINE ISLAND**

**10**

A basic principle of eco-tourism is to preserve and maintain as much of a natural setting as possible. That is, the more natural looking the area is, the higher the quality of a visitor's experience. Although a large portion of the Lake Apopka basin is already developed, significant opportunities exist for retaining a sizable part of the natural landscape. Needs and Opportunities relating to maintaining a natural setting are found both along the shore of Lake Apopka and within a large part of the southwestern portion of the basin around the Town of Montverde. As rural and undeveloped areas, however, they are extremely sensitive to the growth of Orlando metropolitan area, and the type, pattern and pace of development that is occurring in the basin.

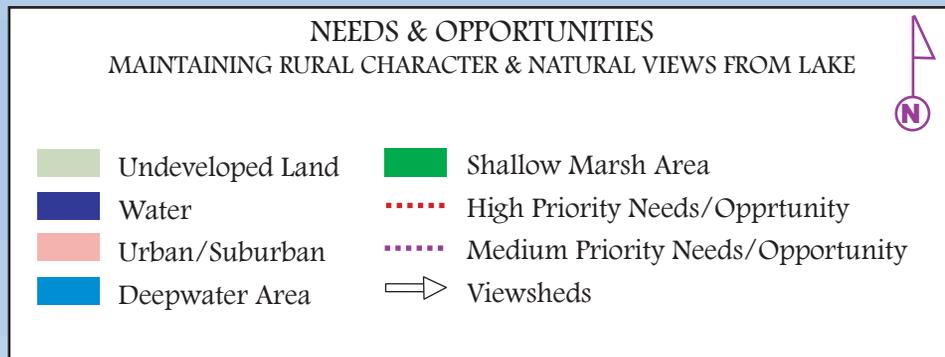
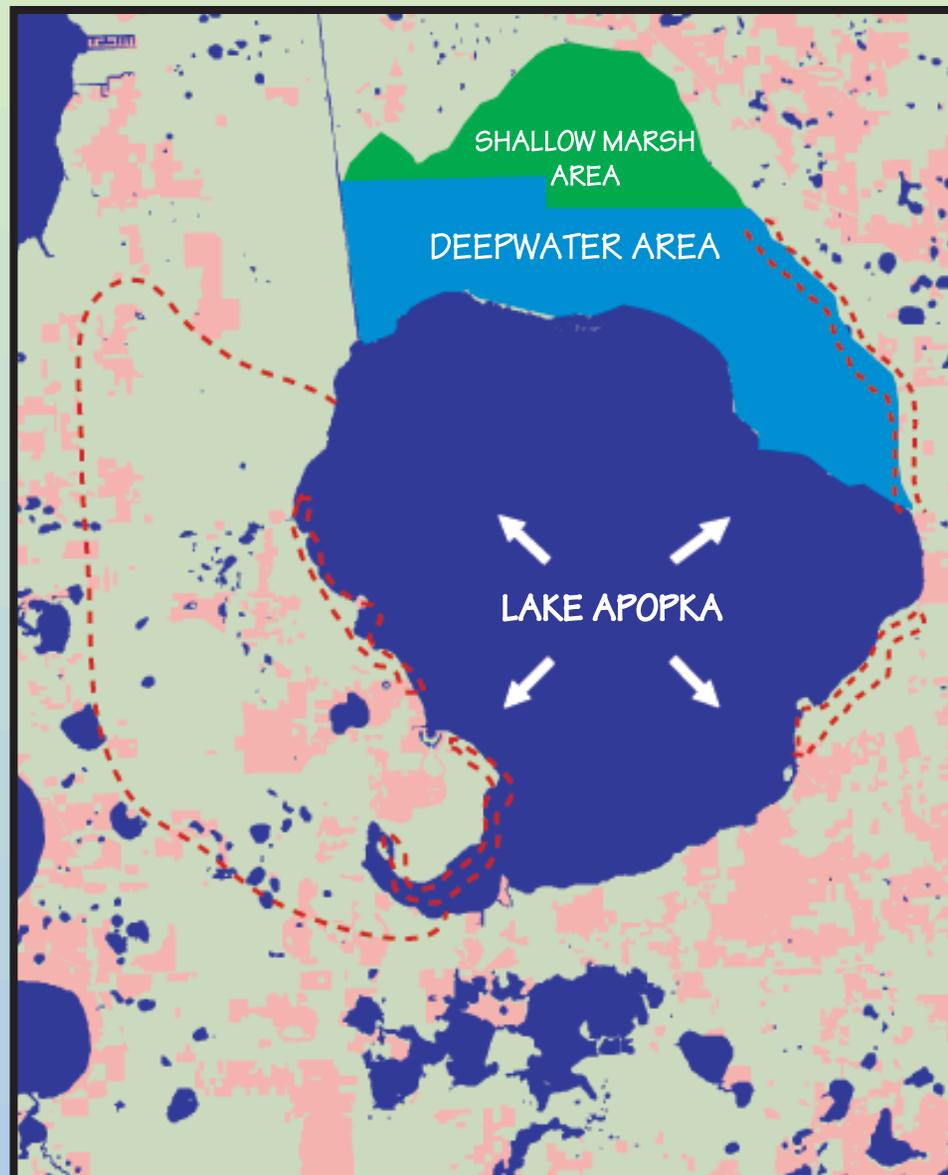
#### UNDEVELOPED SHORELINE

As water quality in Lake Apopka continues to improve, recreational use of the lake - for fishing, skiing and boating - will increase. The quality of this experience will be greatly enhanced by minimizing shoreline construction that can detract from the presentation of the lake as a mostly undeveloped resource. In particular, individual boat docks and boathouses, and poorly sited homes can change the perceived character of the lake significantly. The shoreline of the Butler Chain of Lakes, before and after development, offers a dramatic picture of the type of changes that could occur, but should be avoided.

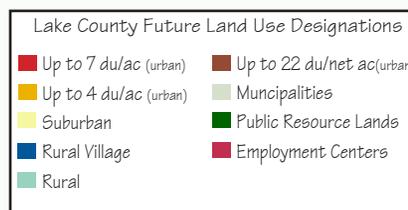
#### RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Lake County's Comprehensive Plan currently assigns a series of low-density land uses to their portion of the basin north of the Turnpike. This portion of Lake County is the only part of the basin designated in a comprehensive plan as rural, or that can reasonably be expected to remain rural. The majority of the area is assigned densities of 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres, with an opportunity for increased densities of up to 4 dwelling units per acre within specified areas and under certain development conditions. The intent of these land use classifications is to maintain a rural character in that portion of the county, and allow low intensity agricultural uses by individual owners. The County's planning documents note, however, that the development pattern has not been on a five-acre tract basis. Rather, a large amount of land is held in large tracts and often under single ownership. The implication is that as this area develops, it will be at something much denser than 1 home on 5 acres. Past and current development proposals for this area appear to support this.

Lake County development policies encourage clustering and rural design of residential uses. This approach to development should be vigorously pursued. It will allow, within a framework of accommodating new



development, for a more natural and rural looking appearance than could be achieved simply by relying on low density zoning. Designing a rural landscape involves strategically siting development in a way that maximizes open space - woodlands, small lakes, pasture, ridges and hilltops, and wetlands. Open space areas should include the most sensitive resource areas of a property. In addition, they should include locally significant features on the property such as viewsheds. Open space lands function best when not divided into individual backyard areas. Each development, working within the existing densities allowed, would provide a "building block" in the area's overall rural strategy, resulting in an interconnected network of permanent open space. Such an approach is akin to master planning an entire area with the overriding goal of minimizing the visual intrusion of new development into the landscape.



# The Natural Settings

