

New Basin Framework

Effectively planning for the basin's future requires looking at it in a new way, approaching problems in a new way, and operating within a new conceptual framework.

A new conceptual framework creates a way to view the Lake Apopka basin as a living, breathing organism where the whole benefits from each of the parts and each of the parts benefit from the whole. It is a way of looking at the basin's needs and opportunities based upon the realities of how the basin functions and the relationship between ecological integrity, economic well-being and the basin communities' quality of life.

The framework is built on the basin's natural resources. These resources come before all other functional systems and form the context within which the basin operates. They existed long before the basin was settled, and they shaped the original settlement that took place. It is the historical basis upon which the area's economy was built and from which the area has benefited for the last hundred years. Even after experiencing substantial development over the years, the expanse of resources in the basin continues to endow it with a rich natural heritage. In addition to Lake Apopka, there are many lakes, tributaries, and springs, varying landforms and drainage basins, wetlands and uplands and plants and animals that inhabit these areas.

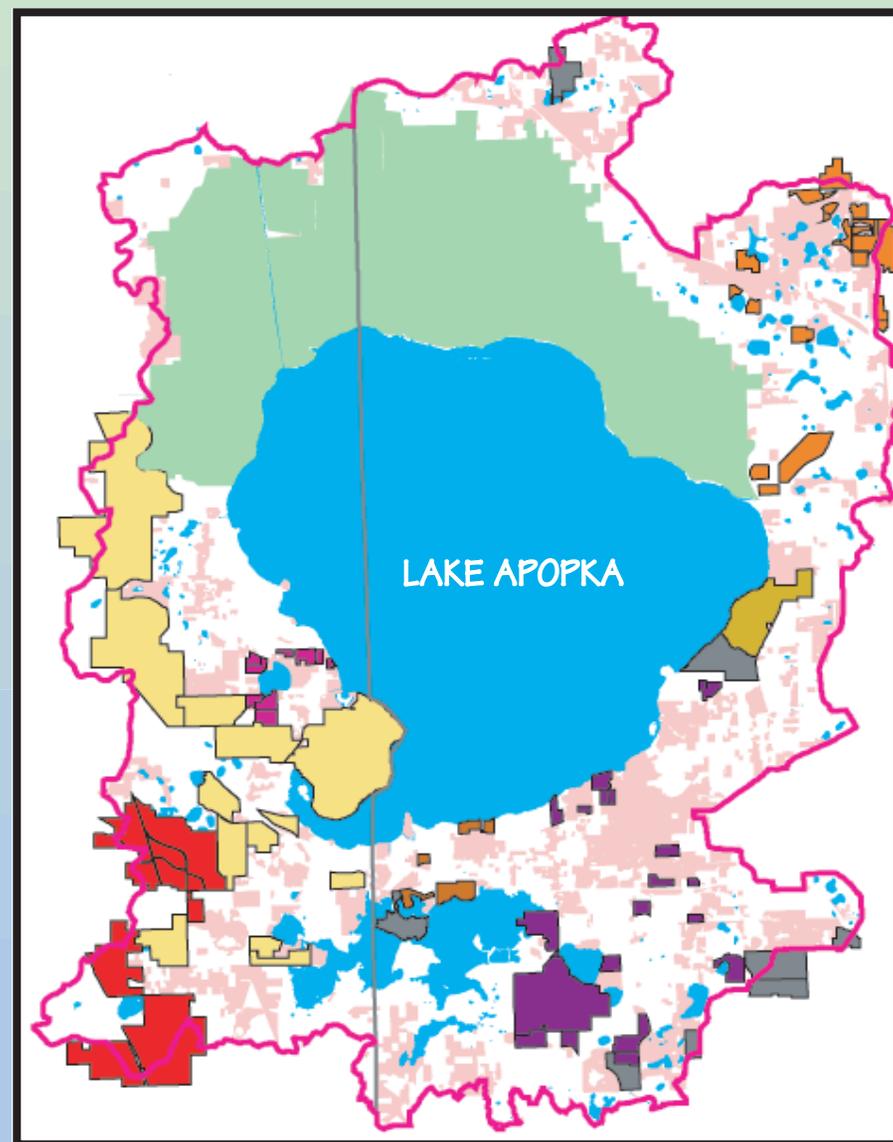
Recognizing the role of natural resources within the new framework is critical because of their uncertain future. Historically, the future most communities have faced is the systematic conversion of every acre of buildable land into a developed use. As the Orlando metropolitan area grows and continues its expansion into west Orange County and Lake County, the threat that conventional development poses to the basin's natural resources is magnified. The pace and momentum of metropolitan growth is such that it will, in a very short time, leave little of the basin's natural resources intact. While \$100 million is being invested to restore Lake



Apopka's natural functions, natural resources in the basin's uplands, which help support the lake's continued health, will likely undergo a reverse transformation - from natural to developed.

Conserving the natural resources in the basin's uplands is the highest priority. Using these systems to enhance the basin position as a major international, national and state center for eco-tourism is the second priority. Eco-tourism is the fastest growing sector of the tourism industry. While currently the use level is low, it is in the growth stage of the business cycle and growing rapidly. Eco-tourism will benefit most from the demographic change occurring in the country in which the population's increasing age will result in a greater demand for less active and more educational and appreciative outdoor recreational activities. Increasing participation, more market supply, more private development, and higher media profile are expected by the industry.

The Lake Apopka basin is positioned to capture a major share of this emerging market by capitalizing on its proximity to the number one tourist destination in the



world as well as the natural setting and activities lake restoration will support. A glimpse of what this area has to offer was seen in the national 1998 Christmas Bird Count (CBC) that encompassed the entire north shore restoration area. Bird watchers identified 174 species of birds; the highest species total for an inland count in the history of the annual CBC.

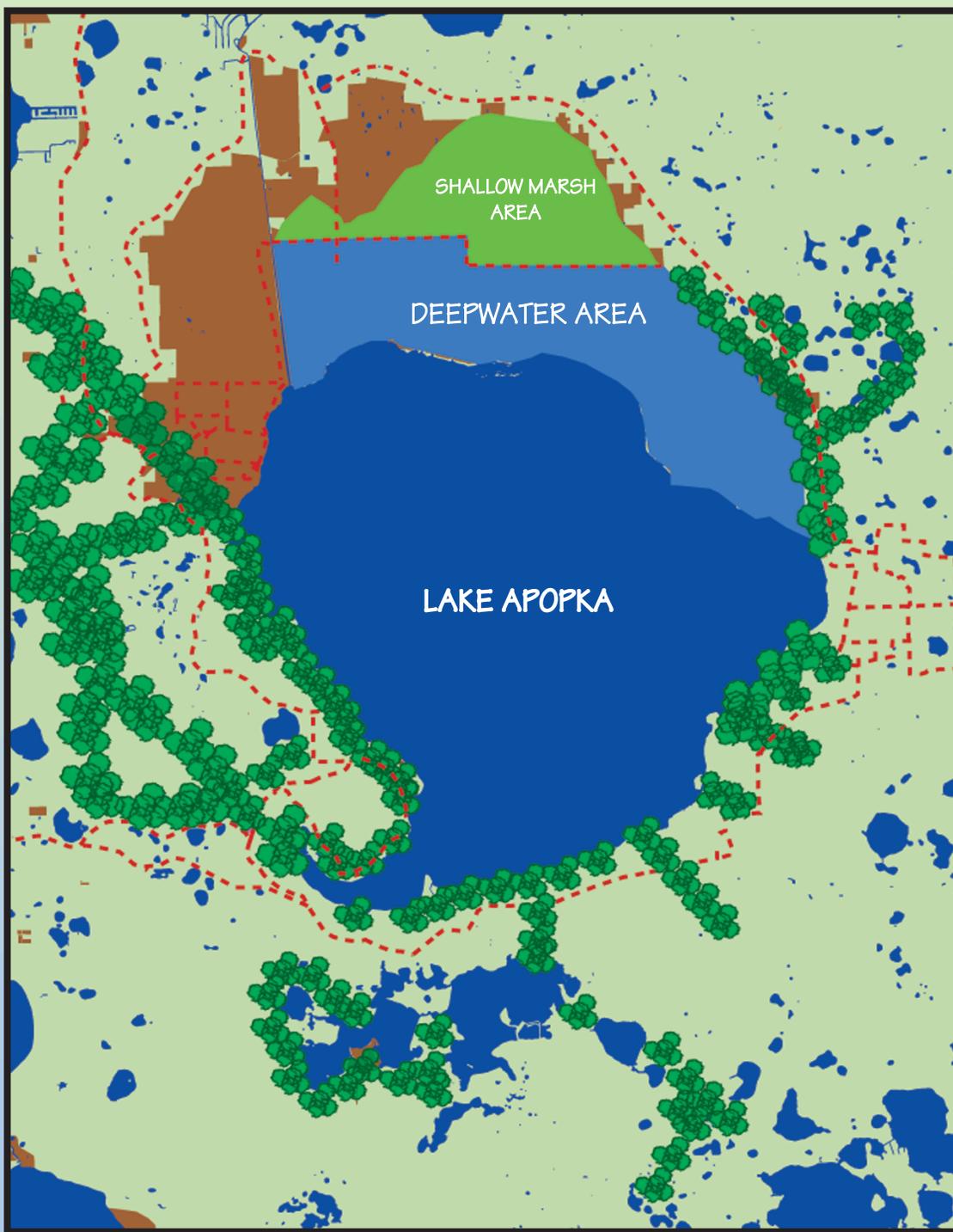


lakes

Tributaries

SPRINGS, WETLANDS

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Bird diversity is extraordinary in this area, and the bird list, which continues to grow, now includes more than 270 species.

The advantage of eco-tourism to communities within the Lake Apopka basin is that it is both a successful community development tool, with the commensurate economic benefits, and an effective conservation tool. One supports the other. The new conceptual framework for the Lake Apopka Basin embraces these realities. It elevates the importance of the basin's natural resources by suggesting that they set the direction for future development. In this framework, the structural and functional needs of key natural resources play the role traditionally played by roads and other types of engineered infrastructure in

establishing an area's development pattern. When combined with resource-based facilities that can contribute to establishing a strong eco-tourism industry in the basin, they form the basin's Green Infrastructure. It is this infrastructure, as opposed to traditional development infrastructure, that offers the best opportunity to guide the basin toward a sustainable future.



Viewsheds

parks, trails

WOODLANDS

