

# NATURAL RESOURCES

## OVERVIEW

The Natural Resources element looks at the natural systems of the community including climate, topography, soils, water bodies, and other natural features. This information is important to help protect a community's quality of life by promoting proper development, maintaining aesthetic characteristics, preserving open space and significant natural resources.

### Climate

The climate of Laurens is relatively mild, with an average temperature of 60.1 degrees Fahrenheit. This is slightly lower than other portions of the state such as the Columbia region, which has an average annual temperature of 63.1, and the Charleston region with an average annual temperature of 64.8 degrees. Precipitation is fairly constant throughout the year with an average of 4.3 inches of rain per month. The Columbia region averages 4 inches of rain per month, while the Charleston region averages 4.2 inches per month. The growing season is from late March to early November and averages 225 days.

### Topography

Laurens is located in the Piedmont region of the state, which is characterized by rolling to hilly topography. Elevations range from 900 feet at the edge of the foothills/mountain area to 600 feet along the Saluda River Basin at the south end of the region. The terrain becomes progressively less hilly from north to south across the region.

### Soils

The soils of the Upper Piedmont have developed from the weathering of metamorphic rock such as granite, schist, gneiss, and diorite. Deep sandy to red brown clay subsoils are found in most associations. The soils are mainly well drained with moderate-to-severe erosion hazards, dependent mainly on slope. Some Upper Piedmont soils are suitable for on-site sewage disposal, except where slope is a problem. Extensive areas of alluvial flood plains are found in most stream drainage basins. The soils of the upper Piedmont include some of the best farmlands in Upstate South Carolina. Vast areas of poor or eroded soils have been abandoned in the past due to intensive agriculture.

### Wetlands

The definition of a wetland is fairly simple. Any land that is under water or inundated by water for a period of time so as to allow aquatic related vegetation to grow where it would not be growing otherwise is a wetland. Therefore, the three main ingredients for a wetland is plenty of available water, a soil that holds water, and aquatic vegetation. Any combination of these elements on a site would be enough for that site to be considered a wetland and the Corps of Engineers should be contacted before any activity takes place on the property.

### Flood Plains

As with wetlands, flood plain determinations should be made prior to any construction activity. The US Army Corps of Engineers provides maps to use as guides for the location of flood plains. Before any activity takes place on a property, either the maps or the personnel from the Corps of Engineers should be

consulted. Flood plains in Laurens County generally conform to the larger rivers and creek boundaries, such as Little River and Rabon Creek. Controlling development in these potentially dangerous areas would benefit Laurens County and its citizens.

#### Important Farmland

The US Department of Agriculture has designated certain areas of land to be of national agricultural importance. This designation is made on the basis of quality of the soil and past production of crops. Areas of Laurens County marked as important include farmland in the southern half of the County.

Once farmland is lost to another use, it is rarely if ever returned to uses for food and animal production. Therefore, farmland is a scarce resource that must be maintained and protected. Because of Laurens County's strong agricultural history and current high rate of growth, conflicts between land uses are inevitable. One of the purposes of this plan is to call attention to that potential conflict and provide remedies so that Laurens County continues to grow and farmland is protected for future generations.



Goals/Implementation Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame	Completion Date
<b>Goal. To preserve and improve the environmental quality of Laurens County through measures which protect natural resources and environmentally sensitive air, lands, and waters.</b>			
Assess the current conditions of the County's natural resources through regularly scheduled inventories.	Administration	Short Term	
Institute measures to protect the quality of surface waters within the County, including wetland resources, springs, rivers, streams and floodplains.	County Council Planning	Short Term	
Work with farm organizations and owners, SCDHEC and other partners to reduce pollutants in the waterways in Laurens County.	SCDHEC Planning	Short Term	
Promote the use of Best Management Practices for all development sites to reduce erosion and runoff. Enforce noncompliance.	Planning	Short Term	
Implement and enforce measures that improve environmental quality on a site-by-site basis through the establishment of performance standards for environmentally sensitive areas	County Council Planning	Short Term	
Utilize the County's website and other forms of public communication for natural resources tips for the public and to educate residents about the relationship between land use decisions and the ecology of the County	Administration	Short Term	
Promote the use of native and/or adaptive plant materials in new public and private landscaping projects and provide incentives to do so.	Planning	Short Term	
Maintain and enhance habitat diversity for wildlife through native plantings & protection of waterways	Planning SCDNR	Long Term	
Review and, where necessary, revise ordinances to ensure that developers provide adequate open space or conservation areas for the residents of their developments.	County Council Planning Commission Planning	Short Term	
Develop a Greenways, trails and bikeways along floodplains and creek corridors.	County Council	Mid Term	