

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

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**SUFFOLK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
GENERAL GUIDANCE MEMORANDUM #17
AGRICULTURAL AND GOLF COURSE DENSITY**

AUTHORITY

The Suffolk County Sanitary Code sets forth requirements for approval of water and sewage disposal systems. The statutory authority for these guidelines can be found in Article 6 Section 760-603.

PURPOSE

Article 6 allows for the installation of subsurface sewage disposal systems in Groundwater Management Zones (GWMZ) III, V, and VI when the population density equivalent is equal to or less than that of a realty subdivision or development of single family residences in which all parcels are at least 40,000 sq. ft. For parcels that are outside of these zones and served by a community water supply, the population density equivalent is based on minimum 20,000 sq. ft. lots.

Article 6 further defines a clustered realty subdivision as one which allows a substantial unimproved portion of the tract to stand open and uninhabited. Other construction projects that are not subdivisions of land such as condominiums, planned retirement communities, and apartments must also comply with Article 6 population density requirements. These requirements are based on a standard subdivision yield map or calculation of the adjusted gross land area.

PROBLEM

The process of determining population density equivalent is straightforward when the undeveloped portion is to remain as unimproved open space. Covenants and restrictions recorded against the property allow only for property maintenance activities and passive recreational pursuits in the open space. Complications arise when the undeveloped portion is proposed for agricultural use or recreational turf (e.g. golf courses, ballfields). Because Article 6 density requirements are designed to limit total nitrogen concentrations in groundwater to 4 Mg/L in GWMZ III, V, VI and 6 Mg/L in the remaining zones, it is incumbent on the department to disallow lot yield for such uses.

Monitoring well data has shown that turf maintenance and agriculture can add significant nitrogen to the groundwater. Data from golf courses shows an average nitrogen concentration of approximately 4 Mg/L and data from farm fields shows that nitrate levels from agricultural practices exceed 6 Mg/L in groundwater.

GUIDANCE

This guidance for allocating density for parcels where agriculture, or golf courses or other recreational turf are proposed or allowed supersedes all previous guidelines and is as follows:

In determining allowable density, consider as developable only that land which will NOT be used for agricultural, golf course, or other recreational turf.

EXAMPLES

- ◆ If 40 acres of a 100 acre parcel may be farmed, or used as a golf course, then approximately 60 units (based on 1 unit per acre) would be allowed in Zones III, V, and VI, and approximately 120 units would be allowed in other zones (based on 2 units per acre). This assumes full yield. Actual yield would likely be lower based on either a standard 20,000/40,000 sq. ft. yield map or 75% of adjusted gross land area.
- ◆ If a vineyard wishes to construct a winery and “wine tasting” facility, only that portion of the vineyard not in crops may be used for calculation of population density equivalent.
- ◆ For condominiums or like units intermingled with a golf course, the golf course portion of the project must be separated out of the parcel area. Density would be based on the remainder of the parcel.
- ◆ For golf courses, density for accessory uses such as clubhouse or restaurant, may be derived from those areas not actually used for play such as parking, area of buildings and area of any wooded portions of the parcel that are not part of the golf course.
- ◆ For pre-existing developments where land has been set aside for agricultural use or recreational turf, the same rules apply. Hence, a partially developed parcel may not claim density credit for acreage used for agriculture or recreational turf, regardless of density allocation formulas that were originally used in the review and approval of the initial development proposals.

Issued by: Vito A. Minei, P.E., Director,
Division of Environmental Quality
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