

CHAPTER 829

ZONING ORDINANCE: KARST AND SINKHOLE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

829-1. Purpose and Intent

The purpose of this chapter is to establish review procedures, use limitations, design standards and performance standards applicable to site developments that encompass or affect sinkholes or other karst features. The intent of this chapter is to protect the public health, safety and welfare by requiring the development and use of environmentally constrained areas to proceed in a manner that promotes safe and appropriate storm water management and ground water quality.

829-2. Policy

Unless expressly stated otherwise or contrary to context, the provisions of this chapter shall be interpreted and applied in accordance with the following policies:

- (A) Development in areas that encompass or affect sinkholes or other karst features (i.e., in "sinkhole areas") is prohibited unless expressly permitted by this chapter or until it is demonstrated that the development would have no significant detrimental impact on storm water management or ground water quality.
- (B) Potential impacts on storm water management and ground water quality must be identified, assessed and addressed through written studies at the earliest stages of the development approval process (e.g., during the preliminary plat, development plan or site plan approval stages).
- (C) The extent and sophistication of any required study should directly reflect the nature and complexity of the proposed development and of the development site (e.g., the more complex the karst features, the more extensive and sophisticated the study).
- (D) All applicable Federal, State and Local permits shall be obtained prior to construction.

829-3. Development Requirements

- (A) This chapter shall apply to all public, private and institutional land disturbing activities, with the following exception:
 - (1) Logging, mineral extraction, and agricultural uses.
 - (a) Accessory structures and roadways used for mineral extraction uses shall comply with the Ordinance if there is an anticipated impact on any adjacent property;
 - (b) Accessory structures and roadways used for logging and agricultural uses shall comply with the Ordinance; and,
 - (c) The above notwithstanding, the filling or plugging of a sinkhole with any material (e.g. earthen, manmade, animal or vegetable) in a way that adversely affects stormwater management or groundwater quality is prohibited.

- (B)** Any report, study, plan, calculation or proposal required by this chapter shall be provided by the petitioner at the petitioner's cost.
- (C)** Sinkhole conservancy areas (SCA) shall be established to the following minimum standards in all sinkhole areas subject to the sinkhole evaluation requirement of Section 829-4:
 - (1)** For sinkholes less than or equal to one quarter (0.25) acre in area, the SCA shall, at a minimum, encompass the entire sinkhole and all of the area within twenty-five (25) feet of the sinkhole rim.
 - (2)** For all sinkholes greater than one quarter (0.25) acre in size, the SCA shall, at a minimum, encompass all of the area within fifty (50) feet of the post-development sinkhole flooding area as determined in 829-6 or all of the area within twenty-five (25) feet of the sinkhole rim, whichever is less.
 - (3)** For compound sinkholes, the SCA shall be established in accordance with parts (1) and (2) above for each component sinkhole and for the compound sinkhole. For example, if the compound sinkhole is greater than one quarter (0.25) acre in area, the SCA shall comply with part (2). The SCA for sinkholes that are less than one quarter (0.25) acre in area and that are within the compound sinkhole must comply with part (1). It is possible that areas within the rim of a compound sinkhole will not be subject to a SCA.

If a SCA is required to be established on a parcel that was not, or will not be created by recorded plat, a legal description of the SCA shall be included on the recorded deed of the parcel.

- (D)** Setbacks and Use Restrictions. The following setbacks and use restrictions are established.
 - (1)** No new construction of any of the following shall be permitted within the SCA:
 - (a)** Commercial or industrial structures;
 - (b)** Private drives, streets, and highways unless the County Highway Engineer and Drainage Engineer conclude that traffic safety considerations outweigh stormwater and water quality considerations;
 - (c)** Storage yards or parking lots for materials, vehicles and equipment;
 - (d)** Residential structures and accessory structures;
 - (e)** Public, semi-public and office facilities;
 - (f)** Swimming pools and other amusement and recreational services unless expressly permitted; and/or
 - (g)** Stormwater detention features that have not been approved by the drainage board.

- (2)** Construction of the following shall not be permitted within twenty-five (25) feet of the sinkhole rim regardless of size of sinkhole:

 - (a)** structures for storage of hazardous material(s); and/or
 - (b)** any structure associated with a use allowed in Light Industrial (LI) or Heavy Industrial (HI) zones.
- (3)** Residential, commercial, and industrial structures and public, semi-public and office facilities shall not be constructed within the sinkhole rim unless the lowest floor elevation is a minimum of five (5) feet above the sinkhole flooding elevation, or one (1) foot above the lowest elevation on the sinkhole rim, whichever is less, and provided that a statement of a registered professional engineer or geologist is submitted to the Administrator (see definitions Chapter 801) indicating that foundation conditions are suitable for such structures.
- (4)** Individual Wastewater Systems

 - (a)** Septic tanks shall not be located within the SCA.
 - (b)** Septic Disposal Fields or wastewater stabilization ponds (lagoons) shall not be located within twenty-five (25) feet of the SCA.
- (5)** Pesticides and fertilizers may be used in sinkhole areas only in accordance with the rules and regulations of the State of Indiana Pesticide Review Board and with industry standards.
- (6)** Operation of heavy construction equipment is prohibited in the SCA unless:

 - (a)** it is demonstrated to the Administrator that the operation of such equipment is necessary to prevent clear and imminent danger to persons and property;
 - (b)** the operation of such equipment is necessary to implement a drainage and/or erosion control plan approved by the Drainage Board; and/or
 - (c)** if the operation of such equipment is required for the removal of material from a previously filled sinkhole.
- (7)** Underground utility lines, equipment and facilities shall be installed in a manner that does not disturb a sinkhole eye or disrupt the natural pattern of storm runoff into the sinkhole. Sanitary sewer lines installed within a SCA shall be water grade pipe.
- (8)** Recreational facilities such as unpaved hiking, jogging, and bicycling trails, playgrounds, and exercise courses, are permitted within the SCA.
- (9)** Golf courses and grass playing fields are permitted within the SCA subject to approval of a Management Plan for use of pesticides and fertilizers by the Administrator.

- (10) Clearing and pruning of trees as well as understory, and limited grubbing of roots is permitted within the SCA provided that equivalent or improved protective living vegetative ground cover is maintained.
- (11) Landscaping and minor gardening is permitted in the SCA provided erosion and sediment discharge is limited through use of minimum tillage and mulches. Normal yard and landscaping maintenance is permitted.
- (12) Construction of light incidental landscaping and recreational structures (such as gazebos, playground equipment, etc.), is permitted in the SCA but not within the sinkhole eye. Such structures may not be placed within a SCA on excavated foundations or concrete pads but may be placed on small concrete post-hole foundations.

The above notwithstanding, no land disturbing activity may occur within a SCA if that development, construction or use is determined by the Administrator to violate the intent of this chapter.

- (E) Newly formed or pre-existing sinkholes that become active in a way that causes an immediate threat to nearby structures, roadways, persons, and/or property may be stabilized and filled provided existing drainage patterns are not changed. This subsection authorizes conditional, emergency action to remediate a hazardous condition. However, within thirty (30) days of the action, the person responsible for taking the action shall submit a report to the Administrator detailing the actions used to stabilize and/or fill the sinkhole. The report shall be reviewed by the County Drainage Engineer and County Surveyor to determine whether existing drainage patterns were changed by the action. If the Engineer and Surveyor find that existing drainage patterns were changed, the person responsible for the action shall promptly take all measures necessary to restore the drainage patterns and to otherwise comply with this Chapter.
- (F) Stormwater Detention in Sinkholes. The Administrator, upon the Drainage Board's recommendation, may waive detention requirements to allow increased runoff into sinkholes and may authorize excavation within a sinkhole flooding area in order to provide additional water detention storage, upon finding that:
 - (1) the flooding concerns expressed through Section 829-6 will be satisfactorily addressed;
 - (2) there are no other areas on the site suitable for detention; and
 - (3) there will be no significant impact on the karst system or upon water quality.

In cases where concentrated runoff is directed to sinkholes, temporary and permanent erosion control measures, as detailed in a plan approved by the Administrator shall be implemented to prevent channel erosion.

- (G) Modification of Sinkholes to Increase Outflow Rates. Increasing outflow rates of sinkholes by excavating the sinkhole eye or installing disposal wells for diverting surface runoff to the groundwater system is prohibited, unless:
 - (1) it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Administrator and/or the Drainage Engineer that such an action is necessary to safeguard persons or property from clear and imminent danger; or

- (2) such an action is required to implement a drainage and/or erosion control plan that was approved by the Administrator.
- (H) Altered Sinkholes. Filling or altering of sinkholes without an improvement location permit constitutes a zoning violation. In the event, corrective measures must be taken. No corrective or remedial measures shall be undertaken until a remediation plan has been approved by all relevant County entities or representatives and the Administrator has issued an improvement location permit for the plan. No building permits will be issued, or zoning or subdivision approvals granted until the remedial measures specified in the improvement location permit have been completed and approved.
- (I) Airport Evaluation. With respect to all land owned, used and/or held by the Monroe County Board of Aviation Commissioners (BAC) for airport purposes, a Section 829-4 sinkhole evaluation (Airport Evaluation) may be made for the entire property (Airport Property). If made for the entire Airport Property, the Airport Evaluation shall be submitted to the Administrator, the Monroe County Drainage Board and the Monroe County Plan Commission for their review. Upon a finding of compliance with this chapter and with other relevant County Code chapters, the foregoing entities shall approve the Airport Evaluation.
- (1) All future development, construction and land disturbing activities (Development Activities) at the Airport Property shall be:
 - (a) Consistent with the approved Airport Evaluation;
 - (b) Remedial actions suggested by the Airport Evaluation and required as a part of the Airport Evaluation approval may be implemented at one time or may be implemented in phases in conjunction with future Development Activities; and,
 - (c) For each proposed Development Activity, BAC shall seek site plan approval and, in connection with that process, shall submit for review and approval that portion of the Airport Evaluation relevant to the proposed Development Activities.
 - (2) The original Airport Evaluation shall remain in full force and effect for a period of five (5) years from the date it is approved by the County Planning Commission. During that period of time, Development Activities at the Airport Property are subject to the approved terms and provisions of the Airport Evaluation and to the zoning and drainage regulations in effect on the date the Airport Evaluation was approved.
 - (3) The Airport Evaluation shall be re-evaluated after a five (5) year period.
 - (a) The BAC may apply for additional five (5) year extensions without limitation;
 - (b) Each request for a re-evaluation of the Airport Evaluation shall be reviewed by the Administrator and may be approved administratively, subject to compliance with current law; and,

- (c) If the Administrator finds that further extension of the Airport Evaluation is not possible under the Federal, State or County Code regulations in effect at the time of review, the BAC shall be promptly notified and shall be given a period of one (1) year beyond the expiration of the current five (5) year period to bring the Airport Evaluation into compliance with the relevant regulations.
- (4) The Airport Evaluation shall be consistent with the Federal and State authorities with respect to Airport Property development requirements.
 - (a) Federal and State standards and requirements will supersede local standards in the event of a conflict or discrepancy; and
 - (b) In the event that Federal and/or State standards change during the period Airport Evaluation approval, activities may continue in accordance with such changes until the end of the period for which the Airport Evaluation was approved.

829-4. Sinkhole Evaluation and Plan Requirements

A Sinkhole Evaluation shall be performed for each site subject to this chapter (i.e., sites upon which sinkholes are fully or partially located and/or which drain to sinkholes). A Sinkhole Evaluation shall include the information set forth in subsections A through F of this section.

The following types of developments or sites may be excepted from full compliance with the Sinkhole Evaluation requirements upon the petitioner's request and a finding by the Administrator that significant drainage or water quality impacts will not result from the development or the use of the site:

- (1) administrative and minor subdivisions;
- (2) lots created greater than 10 acres for agricultural and residential uses; and
- (3) existing lots of record for which single-family residential use is proposed.

The above notwithstanding, neither the Administrator nor the Drainage Board may except a development or a site from subsection 829-4 (E). The burden of proof for establishing that there will be no significant impacts shall rest with the petitioner.

- (A) A plat or site plan for the proposed subdivision or development, setting forth the following information for each of the enumerated items:
 - (1) Sinkholes
 - (a) Location and limits of the area of the sinkhole depression as determined by field surveys or other reliable sources as may be approved by the Administrator. Location of sinkholes based solely upon USGS 7 ½ Minute Series Quadrangle Maps will not be considered sufficient unless field verified by a registered Indiana Surveyor, Engineer, or geologist.
 - (b) Location and elevation of the sinkhole eye or low point.
 - (c) Topographic contours at maximum intervals of two (2) feet, and spot elevations sufficient to determine the low point on the sinkhole rim and the profile of the potential overflow areas.

- (d) Minimum floor elevations of any existing structures located within the sinkhole rim.
 - (e) Elevation of any public or private roadway or drive located within or adjacent to the sinkhole.
 - (2) Flooding limits as determined in Section 829-6.
 - (3) Water considerations specified in Section 829-7, including, without limitation:
 - (a) The approximate location of public or private water supply sources such as springs or wells within 500 feet of the site.
 - (b) Boundaries of any known recharge areas to wells or springs.
 - (4) Other geologic features: location of caves, springs, faults and fracture trends, geologic mapping units.
 - (5) Proposed discharge points: the location, type and size of all points at which concentrated discharges of stormwater into the sinkhole are proposed. The drainage area to each point of concentrated discharge shall be delineated on the plan and the size of the drainage area noted.
 - (6) Existing watercourses which drain into the sinkhole.
 - (7) All other information required to demonstrate or assess compliance with this chapter, as specified by the Administrator.
 - (8) The location of the foregoing items with respect to the location of the proposed or existing roads, detention ponds, significant landscaping features, property lines, underground utilities, and other structures.
- (B) A drainage area map showing the sinkhole watershed area, and where the site is located in a sinkhole cluster area. This map shall be extended to include, in the watershed area, any sinkholes located downstream of the site which may receive overflow drainage from the site.
 - (C) Proposed SCA in accordance with Chapter 829-3 (C).
 - (D) An analysis of the orientation and flow of the sinkhole drainage system, as detailed on the subsection (B) map. The use of dye trace injection testing to produce an accurate mapping of the system may be required by the Administrator when the system drains towards an area that has known flooding problems and for which the flow pattern has not been established through previous dye testing, and when significant increases or decreases in the runoff to sinkholes is expected to result from the proposed development. Significant increases generally occur if the residential density is greater than one lot per two acres (or a commercial development with equivalent impervious surfaces).
 - (E) The approximate location of karst features must be shown on the final plat based on the best available mapping and/or noted on the deeds if no plat is recorded for the subdivision.

- (F) All other information deemed necessary by the Administrator.

829-5.

Permit Requirement

No person or persons shall engage in the grading of land or modification of a sinkhole within the SCA or the area that would be covered by a SCA as described in 829-3 (C) without first securing an improvement location permit from the Administrator .

- (A) The owner of the property or person having an interest therein shall submit an application for a permit to the Administrator along with the sinkhole evaluation required by 829-4. The Administrator shall submit all applications to the County Drainage Engineer for review and comment and may, upon the Drainage Engineer's recommendation, submit an application to the Drainage Board for review and comment.
- (B) Upon review of the information presented by the applicant, the site, and other information as may be available, the Administrator may issue a permit for work to be performed in the SCA.
 - (1) All work shall be performed in accordance with the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance and any conditions of permit approval; and,
 - (2) The Administrator may designate certain areas where grading or construction equipment is not permitted or is otherwise limited.
- (C) Karst-Related Non-Buildable Areas. In addition to establishing a plan for grading and use of construction equipment, the Administrator may, based upon the topography, geology, soils, history of the sinkhole (such as past filling) and the developer's engineer's storm water analysis and plan, establish sinkhole-related non-buildable areas:
 - (1) No buildings, parking areas, grading or other structures shall be permitted within the sinkhole-related non-buildable area unless otherwise authorized by the Administrator; and
 - (2) No private drives, streets, and highways shall be permitted within the sinkhole-related non-buildable area unless the County Highway Engineer and Drainage Engineer conclude that traffic safety considerations outweigh stormwater and water quality considerations.

829-6.

Flooding Considerations

- (A) Sinkhole Flooding Area. Except in cases in which the annual exceedance probability (AEP) of 1% (100 year storm) has been determined in a published flood insurance study, the sinkhole flooding area shall be determined for each sinkhole for both pre-development and post-development conditions, assuming no subsurface outflow from the sinkhole.

Where the estimated volume of runoff exceeds the volume of the sinkhole depression, the depth, spread and path of overflow shall be estimated using methods established by the Drainage Board and shown on the plan.

The overflow volume shall be included in determining the maximum estimated flooding elevations in the next downstream sinkhole. This analysis shall continue downstream until the lowest sinkhole of the sinkhole cluster is reached or overflow reaches a surface watercourse.

The volume of runoff considered shall be that which results from a rainstorm with a 1% AEP and a duration of forty-eight (48) hours. The runoff volume shall be determined by the method set forth in the Natural Resource Conservation Service's TR-55 Manual.

No further flooding analysis will be required provided that:

- (1) The post-development flooding area of any sinkhole which receives drainage from the site is located entirely on the site.
 - (2) A drainage easement covering the post-development flooding area is provided for any off-site sinkhole or portion of a sinkhole which receives increased peak rates of runoff from the site. If the receiving sinkhole is not contiguous to the site, an easement must also be provided for the waterway which connects the site to the sinkhole.
 - (3) The minimum floor elevation of any existing structure is at least two (2) feet higher than the estimated flooding elevation from the 1% AEP 48-hour storm.
 - (4) The increase in volume of runoff from the site does not cause the flooding depth on any existing public road to exceed the maximum depth as determined by the Drainage Board.
- (B) Detailed Flooding Analysis. In cases where the conditions set forth in (A) above cannot be met, a detailed flooding analysis will be required if any increase in runoff volume is proposed or expected. As part of the detailed flooding analysis, a runoff model must be made and a reservoir routing analysis performed for the sinkhole watershed using hydrograph techniques as established by the Drainage Board.
- (C) The following alternative methods may be proposed and approved, singly or in combination, to keep flooding levels at pre-development levels:
- (1) Diversion of Excess Runoff to Surface Watercourses. Where feasible, increased post-development runoff may be diverted to a surface watercourse, provided that
 - (a) Any increase in peak runoff rate in the receiving watercourse does not create or worsen existing flooding problems downstream; and
 - (b) The diverted storm water remains in the same surface watershed.
- Storm sewers, open channels and other appurtenances provided for diversions shall be designed in accordance with applicable sections of these Design Criteria.

The effect of diverted water on downstream watercourses and developments, and requirements for additional detention facilities prior to

release of runoff to the surface watercourse shall be determined as established by the Drainage Board.

- (2) Storage of Excess Runoff within the Sinkhole Watershed. If consistent with the intent of this chapter, detention facilities may be constructed within the sinkhole watershed or the area of the sinkhole outside of the sinkhole flooding area as determined for post-development conditions.
- (D) The flooding considerations set forth in this section are designed and are intended to ensure that:
- (1) Inflow rates to the sinkhole are maintained at or below pre-development values; and
 - (2) Sediment and erosion control and water quality considerations set forth in this chapter can be satisfied.

829-7. Water Quality Considerations

Because sinkholes provide direct recharge routes to groundwater, water quality in wells, caves, and springs may be affected by discharge of runoff from developed sinkhole areas. Consequently, and as more fully specified in subsections A through D below, the Sinkhole Evaluation must address potential impacts of proposed development on receiving groundwaters and must propose water quality management measures to mitigate such impacts.

- (A) Receiving Groundwater Use. The Sinkhole Evaluation Report shall identify whether the site lies within a critical area or a sensitive area based upon the following classifications.
- (1) Critical Areas. The following areas are classified as critically sensitive to contamination from runoff and thus, are critical areas for purposes of this chapter:
 - (a) Areas within 100 feet of private water supply wells.
 - (b) Areas within 300 feet of public water supply wells.
 - (c) Areas within 500 feet of springs used for public or private water supply.
 - (d) Areas within 1000 feet of caves providing habitat to rare or endangered species.

The distances listed above may be extended by the Administrator where the recharge areas for a well, spring, or cave have been determined by studies by a qualified engineer or geologist. The length of the extension may be no greater than necessary to achieve the policies of this chapter.

- (2) Sensitive Areas. Sinkhole areas that are not within critical areas are classified as sensitive for groundwater contamination for purposes of this chapter.

- (B)** Groundwater Contamination Hazard. The relative potential for groundwater contamination shall be classified as low, moderate, or high depending upon the nature of the proposed land use, development density and amount of directly connected impervious area. The Sinkhole Evaluation shall identify whether the proposed development poses a low, moderate, or high hazard to groundwater uses, as defined below:
- (1)** Low Hazard. The following land uses are classified as posing a relatively low hazard to groundwater contamination:
 - (a)** Residential developments on sewer, provided directly connected impervious areas discharging to the sinkhole are less than or equal to one (1) acre in total area;
 - (b)** Parks and recreation areas;
 - (c)** Low density commercial and office developments, provided directly connected impervious areas discharging to the sinkhole are less than or equal to one (1) acre in total area; and
 - (d)** Discharge from graded areas less than or equal to one (1) acre.
 - (2)** Moderate Hazard. The following land uses are classified as posing a relatively moderate hazard to groundwater contamination:
 - (a)** Concentrated discharge from streets, parking lots, roofs, and other directly connected impervious areas having an area greater than one (1) acre and less than or equal to five (5) acres;
 - (b)** Multifamily residential developments and higher intensity office developments, provided the directly connected impervious areas discharging to the sinkhole are less than or equal to five (5) acres; and
 - (c)** Discharge from graded areas greater than one (1) acre and less than or equal to five (5) acres.
 - (3)** High Hazard. The following land uses are classified as posing a high hazard to groundwater contamination:
 - (a)** Collector and arterial streets and highways;
 - (b)** Railroads;
 - (c)** Concentrated discharge from streets, parking lots, roofs, and other directly connected impervious areas having an area greater than five (5) acres;
 - (d)** Commercial, industrial, and manufacturing areas;
 - (e)** Individual wastewater treatment systems;
 - (f)** Commercial feed lots or poultry operations; and

(g) Discharge from graded areas greater than five (5) acres.

(C) Water Quality Management Measures. The majority of sinkholes drain a limited watershed area. For sinkholes where the surrounding drainage area is small enough that the area draining to the sinkhole flows predominantly as sheet flow, potential impacts on water quality can be addressed in many cases by erecting and maintaining reliable silt control barriers around the sinkhole during construction and providing a vegetative buffer area around the sinkhole to filter out potential contaminants.

When the volume of runoff into the sinkhole increases to the point where flow becomes concentrated surface flow, the degree of effort required to capture and filter out contaminants increases significantly.

Concentrated surface flow occurs naturally when the sinkhole watershed area reaches a sufficient size for watercourses leading into the sinkhole to form. Concentrated surface flow results as urbanization occurs due to construction of roads, storm sewers, and drainage channels. Subsurface flows can become concentrated through utility trenches.

(D) Mitigation of Stormwater Runoff. The following water quality management measures may be used to mitigate the impact of storm water runoff quality. Temporary sediment controls are required for all sites. The other measures listed may be used singly or in combination as needed based upon the potential groundwater contamination hazard of the proposed development.

(1) Sediment and Erosion Control

(a) Nonconcentrated (sheet) flow: existing ground cover shall not be removed within twenty-five (25) feet of the sinkhole flooding area and a temporary silt barrier shall be erected and maintained around the outer perimeter of the buffer area during the construction period. Vegetative cover must be of sufficient quality and density to provide desired filtration. If existing vegetative cover is sparse, it must be improved to sufficient quality and density to provide the desired filtration.

(b) Concentrated surface and subsurface flow: a sediment basin will be required at each point where concentrated flows are discharged into the sinkhole. Sediment basins shall be designed according to criteria set forth in the *Indiana Handbook for Erosion Control in Developing Areas*. A permanent sediment basin may be required by the Drainage Board in some cases. This requirement shall be based on the watershed area, the disturbance that the proposed project will create, and the availability of suitable sites for a sediment basin.

(2) Minimizing Directly Connected Impervious Area.

(a) The groundwater contamination hazard category for impervious areas may be reduced by reducing the amount of directly connected impervious area. This is the area of roofs, drives, streets, parking lots, etc., which are connected via paved gutters, channels, or storm sewers.

