



Protecting Our Wetlands and Upland Preserves. Costly Homeowner Incursions Hurt Everyone.

By Sue Remy, Ponds and Preserves Committee.

[Woodlands Word – February 2023]

Rivendell is fortunate to have 115 acres with 14 Wetland and Uplands Preserves. These preserves, along with our ponds, are part of our stormwater management system designed to control flooding. Rivendell Community Association (RCA) is responsible for maintaining our preserve areas as required by the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) and the County. One-third of our homes border designated preserves and residents should be aware of their special responsibilities.

What is a Wetland vs Upland vs Buffer?

Wetland Preserve Areas typically have a dedicated upland buffer between the development (Rivendell) and the wetland. The SWFWMD (District) has specific criteria for upland buffers. They typically consist of existing or planted native vegetation. And like the preserve areas, the structural buffer requires perpetual maintenance.

Wetlands are typically wet for part of the year. Types of wetlands include forested swamps, marshes, river floodplains and wet prairies. Typical wetland plants include pickerelweed, water lilies, grasses, sedges and rushes. Typical wetland trees include cypress, maple, willow, bay, elm, laurel and water oak. An abundant variety of birds, amphibians, reptiles and mammals can be found in wetlands.

How Are Wetlands Beneficial? Wetlands provide storage of floodwaters. Wetlands provide vital water quality treatment by absorbing nutrients from urban runoff. They provide important habitat for threatened and endangered wildlife.



The RCA/HOA is responsible for maintaining our Preserves in accordance with the requirements of



the permit. The RCA is required to hire a licensed and insured preserve maintenance company who regularly inspects these areas to remove invasive or exotic vegetation, and identify areas of encroachment or incursions by homeowners beyond their property line. Preserves are to be left untouched by residents – no planting, trimming, building, storing or mowing into the buffer or preserves areas, plus no dumping of yard waste or anything else.

(Photos: N. Dobias)

Incursions and remediation are costly and affect everyone. The HOA's contractors regularly inspect the preserves for incursion violations to preempt County fines or penalties. Homeowners are notified of incursions for remediation. Some of these issues include: unauthorized removal or trimming within preserve areas or unauthorized planting of nuisance or exotic vegetation in preserve areas, extension of yards or garden areas into preserve areas and construction of structures in preserve areas.

Each year, the HOA spends valuable community resources to address incursions and ensure compliance with the permit. \$1000's of community dollars have been spent on remediation from homeowner incursions that otherwise could be earmarked for positive improvements for our natural resources, wildlife habitats, and keeping Rivendell vibrant. Incursions hurt everyone. Know your property line. Do not encroach beyond your yard. Let's work together to keep our wetland preserves and buffer areas healthy and in compliance.

Click here to visit the Ponds & Preserves website at <https://www.rivendellcommunity.com/ponds>.