



## Rivendell Recognized as Leader In Protecting & Restoring Water Resources

Co-authored by Mollie Holland (NEST) and the Ponds & Preserves Committee

[Woodlands Word – March 2021]



2.9.21

Rivendell is being showcased by Sarasota County as a **Featured Project** for our efforts to control pond erosion. The Public Works, Stormwater, Neighborhood Environmental Stewardship Team (NEST) coordinator, **Mollie Holland**, will feature our success story along with other NEST community volunteers who use effective strategies to protect water resources, reduce water and fertilizer usage and beautify the landscape. We can all be proud of our efforts to improve our stormwater system, control pond erosion, and increase the quality of our water resources. Check out Rivendell's "NEST Featured Project" story: <https://www.sarasota.wateratlas.usf.edu/nest/#featured-projects>

***"We are pleased to recognize communities like Rivendell that are going above and beyond when it comes to protecting the resources and turning the stormwater system into an amenity that all can enjoy – including wildlife," Mollie said. "We think your community definitely fits the bill of "above and beyond."***

### **What is NEST (Neighborhood Environmental Stewardship Team)?**

The NEST concept promotes neighborhood involvement in environmentally friendly projects that protect and restore water resources in Sarasota County. The program focuses on providing education and guidance so community members can advocate for and participate in "hands-on" activities that improve their neighborhood's watershed.



**Mollie Holland, NEST**

### **What Makes Up Rivendell's Stormwater System?**

Our ponds and preserves not only add natural beauty to our community, they play a vital role in stormwater management. Rivendell has 180 acres of 24 named lakes/ponds and 14 wetland preserves, all interconnected through pipes, channels and culverts that together create a stormwater system designed to manage water runoff. Excess filtered water is slowly drained away to South Creek and the Gulf of Mexico.

### **How is Our Stormwater System Managed and Maintained?**

Managing stormwater is complicated. We (RCA) own and have title to our ponds and preserves. They are managed in compliance with Sarasota County and Southwest Florida Water Management District. Shoreline erosion and algal blooms reduce the efficiency of the stormwater system and therefore require regular maintenance. We have learned that inactivity can exacerbate consequences. Failing to address issues is often a guarantee for a costlier remedy later. Our community recognized pond erosion damage and is now taking action.

### **What's Our Solution? The "Rivendell Natural Shoreline"**

Shoreline erosion is visible on most Rivendell ponds, leading to common-ground property loss. After extensive research, our community chose an effective and lower-cost plan to control damaging erosion. LMZs (low-maintenance, no-mow zone) and aquatic plants work together to create our "**Rivendell Natural Shorelines.**" LMZs are now installed around all ponds to control erosion by stabilizing the banks, keeping soil in place, and absorbing excess nutrients and runoff. Our community standard is a 3-foot LMZ, trimmed to 8-12". Aquatics are now planted on ponds visible from streets and will be planted on all other ponds over the next few years.



### **How Can We Make the Most of These Benefits?**

Let's all continue to follow County guidelines for responsible fertilizer and irrigation practices. Reduce water usage where possible. Be proud of your community and help keep it vibrant and strong. Healthier ponds help ensure that our stormwater system functions well, resulting in higher water quality. Happy ponds attract more diverse and abundant wildlife, which in turn attracts more buyers to our community, increases our quality of life, and keeps property values strong.

### **There's More Good News!**

Rivendell is also being praised as a "**Water Quality Champion**" by John Ryan, Interim Senior Manager Sarasota County Public Works, Stormwater Environmental Utility, and Dave Shafer, PhD, Executive Director, Science and Environment Council. Our efforts to protect our pond shorelines with low-maintenance zones and native aquatic vegetation are being recognized. A detailed story is also posted on the same "NEST" page – visit link above.

***Editor's note: The P&P Committee thanks Mollie for sharing her expertise and supporting our efforts. We are honored by this recognition.***