

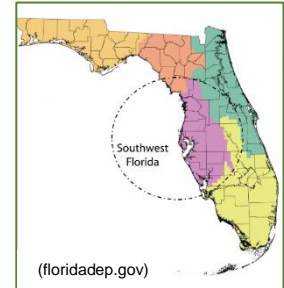


Our Watershed: What Is It? What's its Function? Every Resident Affects the Health of Our Watershed.

By Sue Remy, Ponds & Preserves Committee

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As you may be aware, the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) is the agency responsible for managing and protecting our water resources. Its mission is to manage water and related natural resources to ensure their continued availability while maximizing the benefits to the public. The Southwest District roughly starts north with Marion and Levy counties and south into Charlotte county. The Southwest Florida region (purple) is broken down into several watersheds, including the **Sarasota Bay-Peace-Myakka watershed basin**, which includes Sarasota County, and thus Rivendell.



What is a watershed? Most people have heard the term **watershed**, but do not understand what a watershed is nor its purpose. Based on the concept "*water runs downhill*," a watershed is a land area whose runoff drains into any stream, river, lake, and ocean. In Rivendell, our interconnected ponds and preserves are an engineered system that collects runoff



from both rain and irrigation. Water from the entire community flows and discharges through pipes and level-controlling inflow/outflow structures (weirs & grates) into South Creek, and ultimately into the Gulf of Mexico.

How does a watershed function? As water flows downhill from small to progressively larger streams and rivers, it moves over land and provides water for urban, agricultural, and environmental needs. The watershed community is made up of the humans, animals, and plants that live there. They all depend on the watershed and influence it in some way.

Flowing water carries organic debris and dissolved organic matter that provide food and shelter for aquatic life. At the same time, water may also carry pollutants like motor oil, fertilizers, and pesticides. Numerous activities in a watershed have the potential to degrade water quality. There is no "pure" water in nature. All water is "polluted" to some extent. Even in pristine watersheds where water quality is not affected by humans, "natural" pollutant sources are abundant, such as sediment from stream bank erosion, bacteria and nutrients from wildlife, and chemicals deposited by rainfall. (Source: ifas.ufl.edu)

Watersheds serve five important functions:

1. Watersheds collect water from rainfall to control flooding.
2. Watersheds store water in groundwater and surface water bodies.
3. Watersheds release water as runoff.
4. Watersheds provide vital habitats for flora and fauna.
5. Watersheds provide diverse sites for chemical reactions to take place.

How can we help? Human activities affect all of the functions of a watershed. Every resident can help conserve and improve the quality of water to promote a healthier environment. Our community has hired professional teams to help keep inflow/outflow structures clear, remove excess and invasive vegetation, and maintain our LMZs and plantings. You can help too! Reduce chemical use on lawns. Follow fertilizer and irrigation rules. Keep sprinkler systems working properly. Plant Florida-friendly plantings. Pick up after pets. Dispose properly of lawn clippings and yard debris. We are all responsible for keeping Rivendell's ponds and preserves healthy and vibrant for ourselves, our wildlife, and to keep property values strong.

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