



Regular Maintenance Protects Our Preserves.

Ongoing Actions Benefit Our Community and Wildlife.

By the Ponds and Preserves Committee

[Woodlands Word – March 2022]

Wildfire Mitigation Actions. Mowing Reduces Risk.

Rivendell has about 115 acres of wetland and upland Preserves areas. Lightning-caused wildfires are common in our area. Although there is no evidence of previous fire activity here, there has been a significant buildup of fuels within the preserves that would make future wildfires both difficult to control and damaging to the natural resources. An action plan has been implemented to address the accumulation of excessive vegetative litter to reduce wildfire risks.



Most of the upland vegetation in Rivendell can be classified as pine flatwoods and mesic hammocks. Mechanical fuel reduction (mowing vs prescribed burning) is the primary wildfire mitigation strategy for the uplands in Rivendell. This procedure involves mowing strips at the surface of the vegetation that are 6-12 feet wide to break up the continuity of the fuels. If a wildfire were to occur in these areas, the forward progress would slow down when it reaches one of these mowed lines, making control and access much easier and reducing the heat impact to the canopy trees.

Back in February 2021, the Florida Fire Service brought in specialized equipment (Mulch Mower) to cut needed firebreaks in selected preserve and buffer areas to reduce accumulated vegetation, improve access & lessen fire danger threat. Targeted areas were the uplands of Oscar Scherer State Park Buffer on the East and South borders of our property and between Placid and Eagle Lakes that are inaccessible by municipal firefighting equipment. Mowing is also scheduled for upland areas

adjacent to two of our larger preserves: adjacent to the Pine View path and adjacent to Park Trace. Going forward, ecological mowing will be maintained by Rivendell's HOA using mechanical equipment every 4-5 years, with any required wildlife pre-inspections.

A gopher tortoise survey and bald eagle nest checks will be conducted by a certified consultant two weeks prior to any mechanical equipment use in the preserves.



Cattails Impede Outflow Structure. Removal Required.



At the January HOA meeting, Board President Larry Dobias identified a 20-foot section of cattails that had grown too dense in front of the outflow structure on Scherer Lake South. This dense and rapid growth of cattails had the potential to impede and block the outward flow of water from Rivendell's stormwater system. Because this structure is vital to flood control, the cattails had to be removed.

To control potential regrowth, the cattails were not only cut down, but the debris was removed from

the site. (If cattails were killed in place and debris allowed to settle to the pond bottom, the increased layer of muck could lead to algae issues and possibly future dredging.) Ongoing maintenance will help keep the cattail growth from overwhelming the area in the future. *(Thanks to Nancy Dobias for contributing on this story.)*



(Photo credits: Paul Remy-top R, Bob Frank-top L, Nancy Dobias-bottom three)