

Riverwood Development of Regional Impact Wetland Management Plan

Introduction

The areas included in this management plan, and depicted on the attached map, are wetlands and their associated upland buffers. This plan is not intended to modify SWFWMD or Charlotte County regulations. The goal of this plan is to manage these preserve areas with the best management practices defined by SWFWMD and Charlotte County to preserve and enhance the environmental quality of these areas to improve water quality and provide high quality wildlife habitat.

Acronyms and Definitions

SWFWMD – Southwest Florida Water Management District

EPPC – Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council

IFAS – Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

FFS – Florida Forest Service

FDEP – Florida Department of Environmental Protection

EPA – US Environmental Protection Agency

FWCC – Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Inspection and Management Frequency

All areas will be inspected by an environmental consultant no less than twice per year. Exotic / invasive plants will be managed with the frequency and methodology that conforms to best management practices recommended by SWFWMD, Charlotte County or EPPC.

Exotic Plant Management of Wetlands

The primary goal of this management plan is the systematic elimination of all EPPC Category One and Category Two plants in perpetuity. These species will be suppressed to less than one percent (1%) of the surface area of the preserves. Hand clearing and herbicide application of exotics will be the primary methods of removal.

Herbicide Exotic Plant Management: Only EPA approved herbicides will be used and in accordance to their respective labels. All herbicide application will be done by, or under, the supervision of an applicator licensed by the State of Florida (IFAS).

Upland Buffer Mechanical Management

Some of the upland buffers to wetlands support Saw palmetto, *Serenoa repens* and Brazilian pepper, *Schinus terebinthifolia*. Within these areas:

1. Mechanical management (drum cutting) may be utilized.
2. Mechanical management requires prior notification to the water management district (SWFWMD) and Charlotte County.
3. Mechanical management will only target Brazilian pepper and Saw palmetto.
4. Only low impact (less than 2.5 psi weight footprint) rubber tire or rubber tracked equipment will be used.
5. Equipment will be washed down (particularly tires and tracks) prior to starting work.

6. Equipment will not be operated in areas below Mean High Tide.
7. This work shall be conducted during dry conditions when soil disturbance will be minimal. Any soil that is disturbed will be restored to the original contours and planted if necessary with native plants that are common to that area.
8. Mechanical management will be done under the direct supervision of an environmental consultant with a demonstrated record of successful wetland mitigation / environmental conservation area management and maintenance of similar habitats.
9. All sensitive areas (wetlands, drip-lines, Gopher tortoise burrows, etc.) will be marked by an environmental consultant prior to the start of any work.

Prescribed Burns

1. Prescribed burns will be conducted by an experienced Certified Burn Manager.
2. The decision to use or not use prescribed burns in any particular area will be made in collaboration with the FFS, Charlotte County Fire Department and SWFWMD.
3. No prescribed burns will be started without prior notice to all three agencies above.
4. The decision to use or exclude fire will be based on safety, habitat enhancement and environmental stewardship.

Prohibited activity

1. Any dumping such as landscape material (branches, palm fronds), flower pots, discarded soil
2. Any storage such as landscape equipment and supplies, trailers, boats, trampolines, lawn furniture, picnic tables, etc.
3. Any activity that may directly or indirectly adversely impact any protected species that utilize the Conservation Easement (Bald Eagle, Osprey, Herons, Egrets, etc.)

Reporting

1. An annual report will be maintained by Riverwood for quality control purposes. The report will include the following: wildlife observed directly and indirectly, vegetative inventory (approximate percent coverage of native and exotic species) and hydrological observation. Representative photo points will be included.
2. This report will be available to any governing agency.

Agency Access

Governmental agencies with responsibility for these areas are granted inspection access. Prior notice to the owners is not required.

Wildlife

Any areas that support endangered or protected species will adhere to the appropriate state agencies protection/avoidance measures and will also be managed in accordance with the current best management practices of that governing agency.

For example: eagle nest zone management may include reduction of mid-story vegetation near the nest tree but all work proposed within the designated buffer zones must adhere to the FWCC Bald Eagle management plan guidelines.

For example: no clearing during Scrub Jay nesting season in designated areas.

Archaeological Factors

Any areas that display or indicate aspects or features that may have historical, archeological or cultural significance will be reported to the proper government agency within thirty days of discovery.

Passive Recreational Access

1. This document is not intended to preclude passive recreation or structures that facilitate passive recreation.
2. Passive Recreation means recreational uses where very minimum alteration of vegetation, topography or other native feature is necessary for the enjoyment of the site amenities. Activities which are considered passive include, but are not limited to, hiking, nature observation, picnicking and archaeological or historic preservation.
3. Due to the dynamic hydroperiod of a wetland system, recreational activities will be restricted in order to accommodate the seasonal changes of the water level and the sensitive periods of flora and faunal development. As a result, recreational uses will also be managed for the purpose of minimizing impacts on the ecosystems.
4. The construction of structures (such as boardwalks, walkovers, access ramps or nature trails) of minimal environmental impact may be proposed in these areas for passive recreation. Approval from the appropriate government agency or agencies is required prior to any such activity.