



Natural Assets Committee

Michelle van Schouwen , Secretary



Natural assets management FAQ: Stormwater pond policy



Who at Turtle Rock is responsible for pond management?

The Natural Assets Committee (NAC) reports to The Board of Governors. NAC's mandate is to monitor and manage Turtle Rock's 31 stormwater retention ponds, nearly 40 wetland areas, and other natural assets. The primary function of the retention ponds is flood control. NAC helps assure the retention ponds function (as designed by Sarasota County in conjunction with Palmer Ranch Master Development Plan) to promote ecologically healthier ponds. The committee adheres to current county and state directives and works to mitigate shoreline erosion behind homes. Turtle Rock is known for its extensive preserved lands, waters, and bountiful wildlife.

(continued next page)



What is a littoral shelf?

The shallow area around some pond edges is called a littoral shelf. These shelves are noted on Turtle Rock technical maps. Littoral shelves foster plant growth. The plants, large and small, planted or naturally present, mitigate erosion behind homes, provide wildlife habitat, and filter water, which (among other benefits) reduces algae blooms.

How does NAC decide what plants to allow to grow in ponds?

NAC considers flood mitigation, best practices for healthy ponds, current Palmer Ranch and county standards, the wellbeing of Turtle Rock's birds, fish, turtles, and other wildlife, Turtle Rock's budget, and erosion reduction in every decision. Plants help the ponds meet these goals. The committee considers aesthetics and recognizes that homeowners' preferences vary. NAC regrets that some decisions may not please everyone.

Most often, plants that are 1) not Florida invasives and 2) do not block water management/flow structures, are permitted to remain. Depending on circumstance, spreading but non-invasive plants such as spatterdock or bull rush may be treated to open some water. Fallen branches, large weeds, and floating islands are typically removed.

How do low maintenance zones (LMZs) benefit the ponds?

Current research specifies that an approximately two-foot-wide LMZ maintained at approximately 8-12 inches high reduces runoff and shoreline erosion. The committee maintains these specifications for Turtle Rock's LMZs.

May I fish in the ponds?

Yes! Consult Turtle Rock Owner's Manual for guidance on where to fish.

Where can I learn more?

Check out "Turtle Rock Pond Management: A Brief Policy Summary" on the Turtle Rock website Resources page, and the University of Florida/IFAS (Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences) website (<https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/> then type "ponds" in the search bar).

Logo by Barry Domenick. Common gallinule and little blue heron above littoral shelf photos by Ginny Cheatham. Article by Michelle van Schouwen.