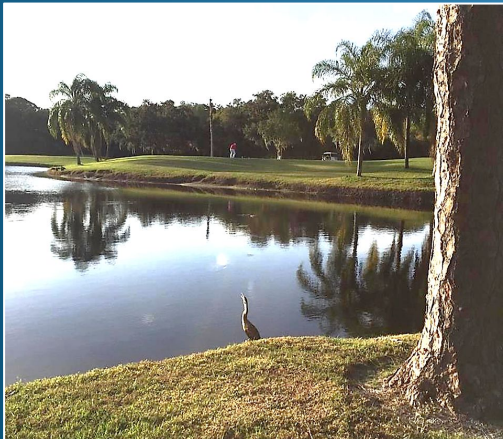


The Meadows Water and Wildlife Committee

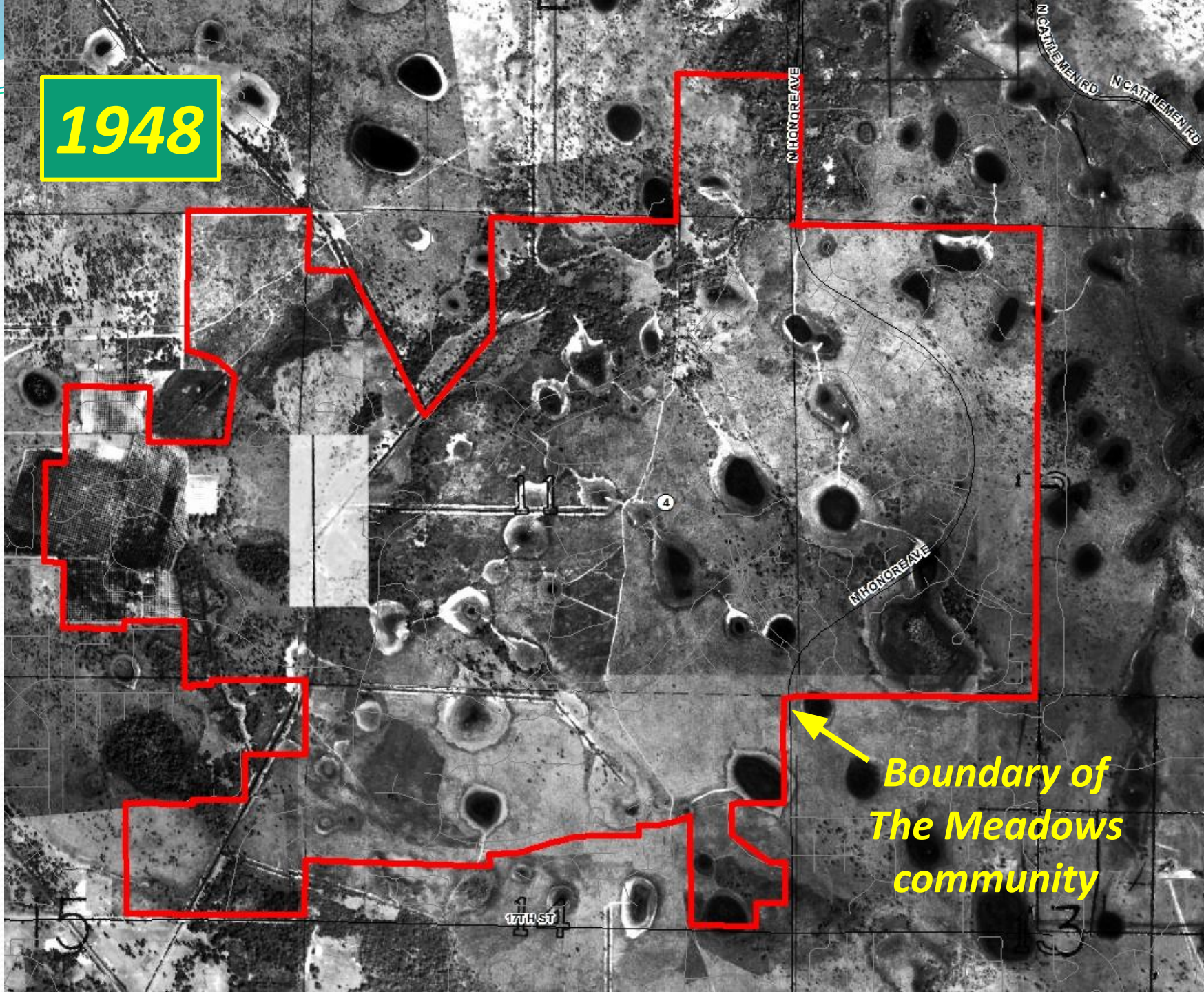
Dr. Bob Hueter

Chair, The Meadows Community Association WWC



Meadows Presidents Council, 9 April 2025

1948



*Boundary of
The Meadows
community*



Today

**85 water features
25 miles of shoreline**



Our Stormwater Pond System

- Primary function is flood control
- Esthetically pleasing, enhances property values
- Supports wildlife
- Provides golf courses with water hazards
- *Challenges:*
 - *Shoreline erosion*
 - *Water quality problems, algal growth, fish kills*
 - *Use of herbicides, pesticides, fertilizer*
 - *Pollution of county watershed and Sarasota Bay*



MCA Water and Wildlife Committee Charter

Established February 2018

The purpose of the WWC is to focus on the environmental quality of MCA water features, including all ponds, creeks and sloughs, and the animal wildlife in and around those water features and throughout The Meadows community, including fishes, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals, for the benefit of MCA community residents and visitors.

The responsibilities of the WWC include the following:

1. Oversee the status of MCA water features in terms of their water quality, aquatic and shoreline vegetation and wildlife, and natural health as Florida waterways, and seek to optimize their ecological functions in balance with their engineering functions of water retention and drainage.
2. Lead activities to preserve and improve the natural ecology of MCA water features and surrounding habitats, including restoration of water quality, management of aquatic landscapes, and conservation of animal wildlife.
3. Advise the MCA on policy involving water features and wildlife in the community, including pond management and wildlife control.
4. Educate MCA community residents and visitors about the importance and functioning of water features and wildlife within the community.



WWC Members

Volunteers, MCA Staff & Contractor

- Dr. Bob Hueter (Chair) – Everwood Run
- Dorothy Anderson – Glebe Farm Road
- Melanie Babineau – Pipers Waite
- Judy Berryman – Windrush Bourne
- Dick Bragaw – Chatsworth Greene
- Bob Clark – Trebor Lane
- Sandy Gilbert – Chanteclair
- Barb Kirkpatrick – Woodmans Chart
- Marianne Magno – Villa Majorca
- Marilyn Schmal – Sandleheath
- Tom Thompson – Pipers Waite
- Frances Rippondi – MCA General Manager
- Mark Pienkos – MCA Board Liaison
- Gil Wilson – SunWest Waterway Management



MCA Board Policy Statement

Adopted February 2019

Five-point policy approved by the MCA Board:

- 1. Adopt Low Maintenance Zones (LMZs, now called No Mow Zones or NMZs) of at least 3' wide and 10-12" high on all shorelines. These are buffer zones where the grass is not mowed but is allowed to grow higher, promoting stabilization of the soil and reducing bank erosion, plus filtering runoff into the ponds.**
- 2. Promote planting of native aquatic plants along shorelines and on littoral shelves.**
- 3. Minimize chemical treatments in ponds.**
- 4. Manage wildlife including alligator reports and responses.**
- 5. Prevent unnecessary disturbance of native wildlife habitat.**



What NMZs Are and Are Not

- NMZs are promoted by Sarasota County as a way to stabilize pond shorelines and improve water quality.
- NMZs are a natural, low-cost deterrent to shoreline erosion.
- NMZs filter runoff of nutrients and other chemicals into ponds.
- NMZs are ecologically beneficial to aquatic wildlife and birds.
- NMZs help discourage alligator haul-outs onshore.
- NMZs are better for landscaper safety.
- If properly maintained, NMZs are esthetically pleasing.
- NMZs are NOT “No Maintenance Zones”!



NMZ Guidelines

- **Minimum of 3 feet wide, more is even better**
- **Maintained at approx. 10-12” high by trimmer, no mowing**
- **May cut lower with trimmer once a year during summer growing season to reduce invasive plants**
- **Should look well-kept, not “shaggy,” and without large bushes and invasive weeds**
- **Keep grass clippings and plant trimmings out of ponds**
- **Seeking 100% compliance of all residents and the MCC**
- **Talk to your landscapers, often!**



No Mow Zones in The Meadows BEFORE



No Mow Zones in The Meadows

AFTER



Shoreline Plantings



Meadows Volunteers Make It Happen!



The Meadows is one of only three communities in Sarasota County – out of a total of 50 doing aquatic planting – that “self-plant” using volunteers, saving thousands of dollars in labor costs



**We plant only Florida native aquatic plants
recommended by Sarasota County environmental staff**



Arrowhead



Pickerel Weed



Yellow Canna



Softstem Bulrush



Spikerush

**Plants are CHEAP, about \$1.50 per linear foot
= 1/100th the cost of shoreline remediation!**



Pond Remediation is Very Expensive

\$70-\$150+ per linear foot!



Geoweb reinforced banks (\$100-\$150 per linear foot)



Geotube reinforced banks (\$70-\$100 per linear foot)



\$150 + per linear foot

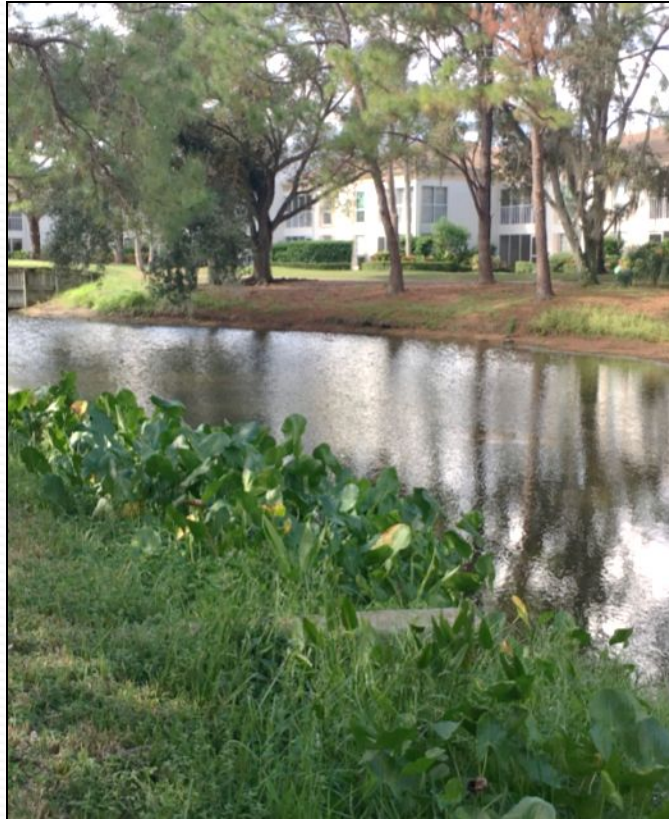
Courtesy of Sandy Gilbert, Healthy Pond Collaborative



Our NMZs & Plantings Are Achieving Success



What We Planted is Spreading on its Own



Educational Signage at Ponds



UF | IFAS
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

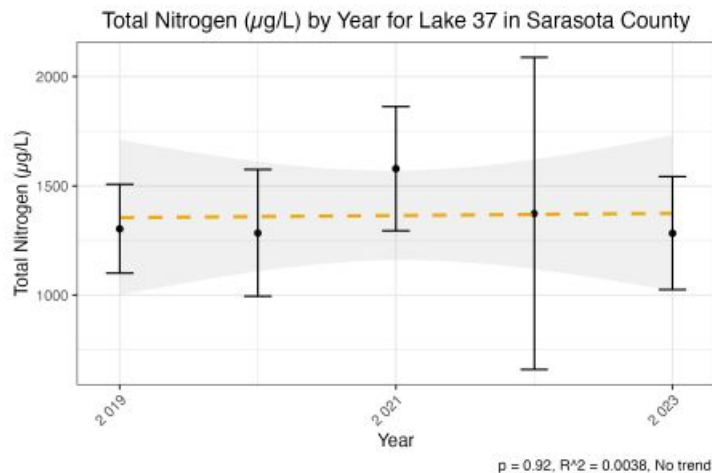
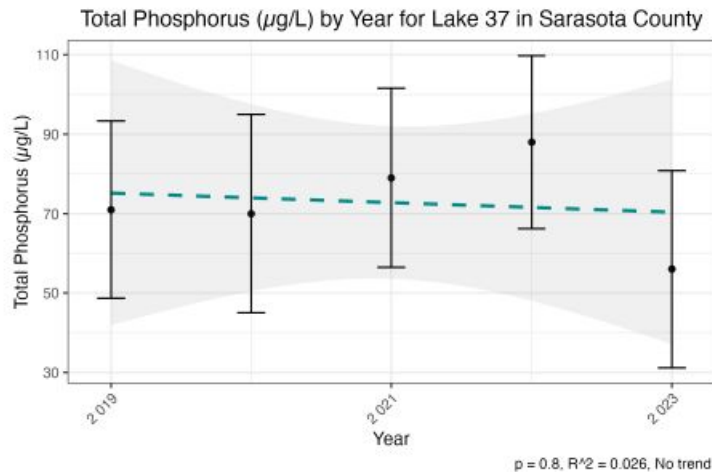


Florida
LAKEWATCH

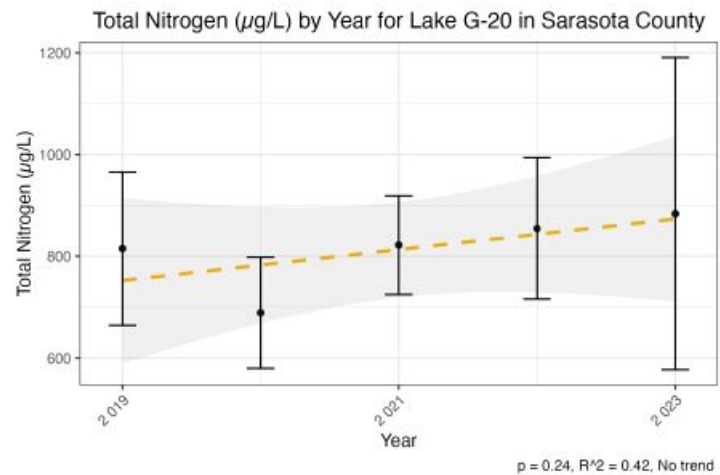
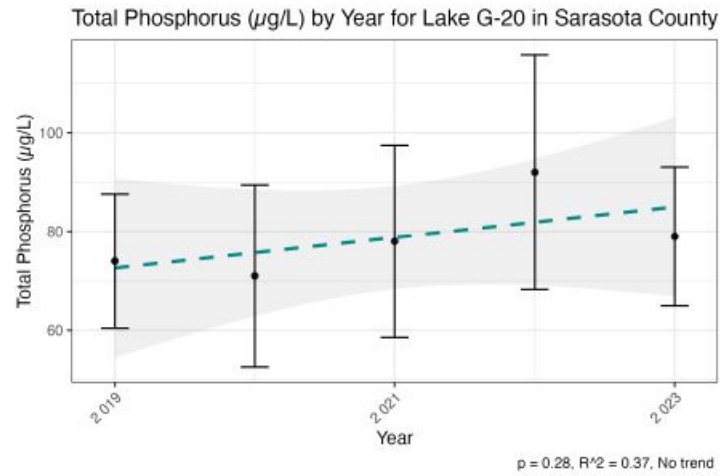


Nutrient levels in our 3 LakeWatch ponds are way below threshold for healthy ponds in our region of Florida

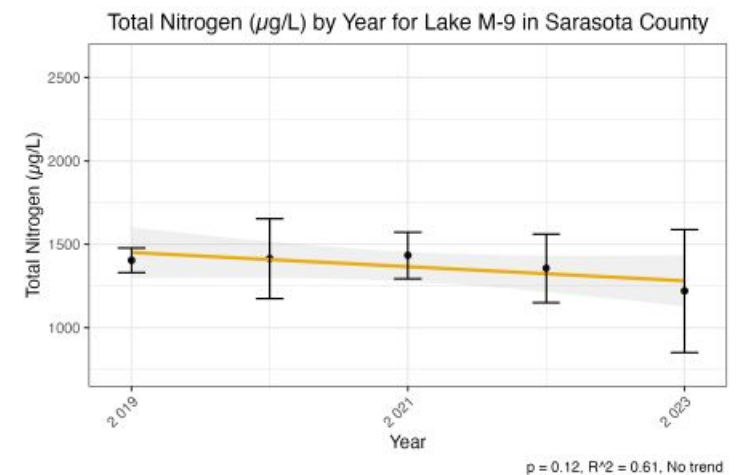
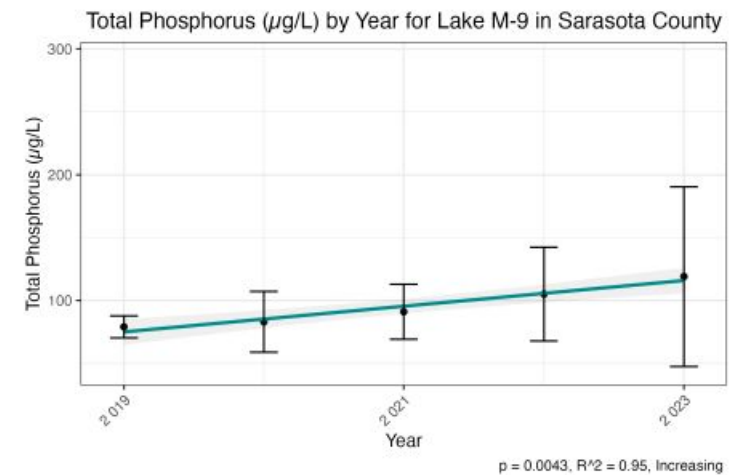
Butterfly Lake



Chatsworth Greene



Hampstead Heath



Alligators in The Meadows

“Investigate, Evaluate, Educate”



MCA Water & Wildlife Committee (WWC): Handling Alligator Reports

The Meadows Community has an abundance of fish and wildlife. While we enjoy our natural beauty in the community we also must coexist with a variety of species, as they are not only esthetically pleasing but they also help preserve the ecological health of our environment. Alligator concerns brought to the MCA by residents are taken very seriously. A single report, however, does not dictate an automatic removal of the reported animal. Our goal is to investigate the report, evaluate the situation, and educate homeowners.

Investigate:

- 1) What is the concern? _____
- 2) Where was the alligator sighted? _____
- 3) What is the approximate size of the alligator? _____
- 4) How long has this concern been an issue? _____
- 5) How far away is the alligator from a residential unit? _____
- 6) Have you noticed anything unusual about the alligator's behavior? _____
- 7) Does the alligator show any signs of injury or disease? _____
- 8) Is the alligator sun bathing (basking) on the bank of a pond? _____
- 9) Has anyone been feeding the alligators? _____
- 10) Do you have small children or dogs? Are you aware of the leash law for dogs in The Meadows? _____

Evaluate:

The WWC will evaluate the homeowner's report by listening to the homeowner's concerns, reviewing a series of investigative questions with the homeowner, and seeking input from the MCA's contractor that maintains the lakes throughout The Meadows. They work in close proximity to alligators and are knowledgeable about their habits. Based on the results of the evaluation, WWC will then provide a recommendation to MCA about how to handle the homeowner's report.

Educate:

Education is the key to staying safe and living in harmony with alligators. It is WWC's goal to educate residents by recommending safety tips, providing literature and links to websites, and bringing in expert speakers on water and wildlife.

Tips to stay safe:

- * Never, ever feed an alligator, not even just once. It is illegal and it will teach the alligator to associate food with humans.
- * Don't walk along the edge of ponds with children or small dogs. Always keep your dog on a leash when it is outside. Be vigilant around ponds at night when alligators could be on the move.
- * Always keep your distance from alligators, at least 30-50 feet.
- * Don't swim in the ponds. Swimming in MCA water bodies is prohibited.
- * Be aware that alligator mating season starts in early April with courtship, then actual mating occurs in May and June. Eggs hatch from mid-August to early September and the mother alligator often protects her young while they are around the nest. Alligators can be more aggressive during these months. Never approach baby alligators as their mother is nearby and will defend them.



IN SUMMARY

WWC Highlights & Accomplishments

2018-2025

- *No Mowing Zone compliance ~75% in The Meadows and MCC*
- *Shoreline planting in ~20 ponds, >12,500 plants covering >1.5 miles of shoreline, supported by grants totaling \$12K from the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program and Healthy Pond Collaborative, with \$5K more received from HPC for this spring's planting. Plant survivorship >85%.*
- *Educational signage, meetings, lectures, and articles in The Meadoword*
- *Participation in Florida LakeWatch Program and UF pond study*
- *Revision of chemical spraying practices*
- *Alligator subcommittee actions have reduced alligator removals*
- *Winner of Keep Sarasota County Beautiful Award (2018)*



9 WAYS TO HELP OUR PONDS



Water & Wildlife Committee

SUPPORT

our policy for healthy ponds

REDUCE

your impacts on our ponds

PROMOTE

education and awareness
of pond conservation

Adopt

No-Mow Zones around ponds
& Florida-friendly landscaping

Limit

use of fertilizers, herbicides,
& other chemicals

Participate

in pond restoration
& fundraisers

Protect

our native aquatic species

Advocate

for science-based decisions
for pond management

Minimize

use of single-use plastics that
can end up in our ponds

Communicate

priorities with community
leaders

Educate

yourself & others

Vote

for conservation-based
HOA policies



What can HOAs and their residents do to help?

- **Educate all homeowners in The Meadows about the importance of healthy ponds for our environment and our property values**
- **Ensure that all landscapers maintain an NMZ on pond shorelines, consistent with MCA policy**
 - ***No mowers within 3 feet of shorelines, ever; use trimmers or other hand tools***
 - ***Maintain buffer height of 10-12 inches; remove invasives***
 - ***Repeat these instructions to landscapers regularly, due to their staff turnover***
- **Keep fertilizer well away from ponds, observe all county regulations about their use, and use fertilizer with 0 Phosphorus and <20 Nitrogen formulas**
- ***Participate in the shoreline planting efforts and consider planting on your shoreline, with MCA approval***
- **Report violations of MCA policy on water & wildlife, whether it be by residents or the MCC, to the MCA**
- **Never feed wildlife in The Meadows**





*For more information, go to
<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/WC468>*

**Thank you to the
Meadows HOAs
and residents
for all your support!**

