

MANAGING MITIGATION AREAS & PONDS

In the July 2011 Seven Oaks News, I wrote an article about the attorneys that the CDD uses to help us with the legal issues. Another area that the CDD Board uses professional help is in managing the 20 mitigation areas and 97 retention ponds. The CDD Board uses ENTRIX for these two tasks. ENTRIX was hired by the

Crown Community Development when they first started developing Seven Oaks in 2001. They needed a company to prepare applications for permits so they could use some of the wetlands for roads and housing areas. They turned to ENTRIX to submit applications to both The Army Corp of Engineers at the federal level and the

Southwest Florida Management District known as “Swiftmud” at the state level.

Some of the conditions in the applications required Crown to recreate new wetland areas called mitigation areas in other parts of Seven Oaks. These areas have to meet certain standards such as 400 trees per acre, 85

percent desirable native vegetation, and no more than 5 percent nuisance vegetation. Swiftmud requires semiannual reports on the mitigation areas to insure that at least 400 trees per acre survive until they reach an average height of 12 feet. Crown contracted ENTRIX to submit the semiannual reports to Swiftmud.



Area in Edenfield damaged by fire on March 7, 2009. It destroyed some of the mitigation areas that had to be replanted to meet the requirements of Swiftmud.



If the trees fall below the 400 per acre due to drought, disease, deer eating them, etc., ENTRIX will replace the trees for a fee. Since the CDD has to pay for ENTRIX to monitor these areas, it is in our best interest to get the trees to an average height so the monitoring is no longer required. In some cases this may require us to pay for new trees to be planted in these areas.

When there was a fire at Seven Oaks on March 7, 2009 that destroyed several acres of conservation and wetlands, the CDD Board paid ENTRIX \$4,818 to replace the amount of trees and vegetation required

by Swiftmud (see picture below).

The CDD has a separate contract with ENTRIX to maintain the ponds at Seven Oaks. ENTRIX visits each pond at least once a month. There are about a dozen ponds that require more frequent visits to remove vegetation by either spraying chemicals or physically removing the vegetation. The pictures above show both methods. The goal is to have a pond look like the one pictured below.

The cost is not cheap. For calendar year 2008, the CDD paid ENTRIX \$122,170. In 2009,

the bill was \$132,050, and in 2010, it was \$126,903.

Per Jeff Harris, Environmental Biologist for Pasco County Utilities, one of the main causes of the algae on the ponds is the nitrogen in fertilizers used by the residents for their yard. He recommends that the residents do not fertilize during the rainy season. When they do fertilize their yards, he recommends the least amount of nitrogen or one with organic nitrogen.

Pasco County does not have an ordinance restricting the use of fertilizers. However, the use of fertilizers has become such

a problem that some of our neighboring counties such as Pinellas, Manatee, and Sarasota have passed ordinances restricting the use of fertilizers. For example, a Pinellas County ordinance that went into effect on June 1, 2011 bans the sale and use of lawn fertilizers containing nitrogen and phosphorus during the rainy season.

In recent months, the CDD has had to use ENTRIX to resolve issues of residents mowing and planting in conservation areas behind their houses. Not only does this increase the ENTRIX bill but could cost the homeowner thousands in fines. ❖

