



## HARRISON RANCH CDD | MANATEE COUNTY, FLORIDA

# Stormwater Ponds and Wetlands 101

This information is provided to answer frequently asked questions about the stormwater management system located within the Harrison Ranch community. A unit of local special-purpose government called a "community development district" or "CDD" operates and maintains the public improvements, including the stormwater ponds and conservation/wetland areas, within the community. The Harrison Ranch CDD requests your help to ensure that we are good stewards of our resources to ensure the beauty and functionality of our community for years to come.



**What is the purpose of the stormwater ponds and wetlands?** The stormwater ponds are designed to manage the runoff from rainfall by preventing flooding and removing pollutants from the water before they can drain into the groundwater. The conservation/wetland areas preserve natural areas to promote proper drainage and flood control.

**Who is responsible for maintenance?** After the ponds are constructed, they are turned over to the CDD for operation and maintenance pursuant to a permit from the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD). The CDD maintains the stormwater ponds and conservation/wetland areas in accordance with permit requirements.



**What does maintenance entail?** The CDD employs various professionals, including an engineer, aquatic maintenance professionals, and landscaping professionals, to ensure the stormwater ponds and conservation/wetland areas remain in compliance with applicable permits. You may see these professionals treating the pond water with chemicals, maintaining the shoreline vegetation, taking water samples, evaluating the pond banks, and undertaking other activities. From time to time, more extensive work, such as pond bank restoration, may be needed. SWFWMD permits strictly protect vegetation in the conservation/wetland areas and along pond banks. Clearing is prohibited except in very narrow circumstances, such as removing invasive species.



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# Easements

Homeowners should be aware that some lots have easements along their edges to allow the CDD to access its property and provide essential maintenance. Although the lot is owned by the individual homeowner, an easement is a **legal right** that allows the CDD to use the property for these purposes.

**How do I know if my property has an easement?** Homeowners should consult the applicable plat and survey for their property. When in doubt, contact the District Manager using the contact info below.

**What does this mean for me?** Homeowners should take care NOT to obstruct easements by installing fences, patios, pools, or other encroachments. Doing so may prevent the CDD from accessing the ponds for essential maintenance and may result in fines from the SWFWMD. You will be responsible for the cost of moving your obstruction if the CDD needs to use its easement areas for access.

**What if the HOA/POA approved my application?** The HOA or POA may approve aesthetics but does not have authority to grant a variance to permit encroachments in CDD easements, because the legal right belongs to the CDD.

**What if my neighbor has an open easement?** Homeowners cannot obstruct easements even if other access points exist, because doing so may result in overburdening the remaining easements.

**What if I install a gate?** In some cases, gates do not remedy the issue because they are not wide enough to allow the necessary maintenance equipment through.

## Prohibited Actions



- Do not drink the water or swim in the stormwater ponds. It has been treated with chemicals and is not safe for consumption or swimming.
- Do not remove vegetation from CDD property, especially around the water's edge or in wetlands. The vegetation helps stabilize the banks, prevent flooding, and in some cases is required by permit.
- Do not allow pool runoff or gutter discharge to create erosion on pond banks or conservation/wetland areas.
- Do not throw grass clippings, yard debris, trash, or any foreign substance into the ponds or conservation/wetland areas.
- Do not block access to CDD easements. The CDD may take legal action to enforce its rights, and you may be held responsible for any fines or costs incurred as a result of the blockage.

For more information on stormwater ponds in general, please visit the website for the Southwest Florida Water Management District at <https://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/>. For more information about the CDD's operations and maintenance, or to report an issue, please contact the District Manager, Matt O'Nolan, using the contact information below.



Website:  
<https://www.harrisonranchcdd.org/>



Contact:  
813.533.2950 Ext.: 2928



Email:  
[monolan@rizzetta.com](mailto:monolan@rizzetta.com)

*Note that any correspondence to District Staff may constitute a public record and that under Florida law, e-mail addresses are public records. If you do not want your e-mail address released in response to a public records request, do not send electronic mail to this entity. Instead, contact this office by phone or mail.*