

A Regulatory Guide to Lakeshore Living in Florida



Is it a stormwater pond or a lake?

A stormwater pond is an artificial pond that is designed to collect, retain and control discharges which are necessitated by rainfall events. These ponds prevent flooding and remove pollutants from the water prior to it draining into the groundwater or into the nearest waterbody.



Wet detention pond in Manatee County

There are different types of stormwater ponds and systems. Some are wet all of the time, and some are dry all of the time. A stormwater control structure can usually be seen along the perimeter of these features.



Dry retention pond in Sarasota County

A lake is a waterbody surrounded by land that was naturally formed by geologic or stream processes. Lakes provide habitat for a variety of plants and animals. They also filter the water, improve the quality and provide a food source for animals. Most natural lake bodies in Florida also have a proper name.



Lake Joyce, Pasco County

Lakeshore Vegetation, Beaches and Docks

Most residents that live along a lakeshore live there to enjoy the natural beauty and recreational opportunities on the lake. In most lakeshore areas, there is a natural, vegetative barrier between the residence and the open-water portion of the lake. This vegetation can vary significantly within a lake and between lakes, depending on the underlying geology, soil chemistry, water quality and water-level fluctuations.

Shoreline vegetation should remain completely natural. Removal, trimming and herbicide treatments can inhibit the ability of this shoreline to effectively cycle nutrients, assimilate pollutants and protect the upland residential lot from

erosion. These areas also provide habitat for game fish, wading birds and other desirable aquatic organisms. There are regulations regarding the trimming, treating and removing of shoreline vegetation, which also apply to nuisance and exotic vegetation. Beach construction and shoreline stabilization structures, such as seawalls and riprap, are also regulated.

Docks

Docks are the primary recreational feature that allow a lot owner access to boat, swim and fish on a lake. There are regulations regarding dock construction at both the state and local levels. The regulations put restrictions on the configuration, size, access boardwalk and dock platform appurtenances (gazebos, living quarters, boat shelters).

Aquatic Weed Control Permitting

Aquatic vegetation waterward of the ordinary high water line (OHWL) in waters of the state is subject to permitting through the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) via the Florida Aquatic Weed Control Act (Florida Statute 369.20). This act outlines allowable vegetation control and removal activities waterward of the OHWL.

These regulations are administered by several state agencies and local municipalities. Permits may require different authorizations for the same activity. Do not assume one permit is sufficient for an activity; always verify with regulating authorities that you have obtained all necessary authorizations (or that your contractor has done so) before any work is conducted.

My Shoreline Looks Much Different than My Neighbors Across the Lake

There are many different types of lakeshores in Florida. Some have low-growing, flowering, aquatic-emergent species. Others are stands of cypress and bay trees. Some appear unkempt and are dominated by large, wetland shrub species. All of these lakeshore systems came into existence through a variety of natural processes.

While some systems may naturally lend a more desirable view that allows for less obstructed access to the lakebody, other systems may completely block a view or limit access. If someone obtains a view or clears access without the proper authorizations, they could be subject to compliance and enforcement proceedings. It is not prudent to assume that the “neighbors” shoreline condition is a compliant condition. When in doubt, always verify with your local municipality and state agency before you or your contractor conduct any shoreline work.

Regulatory Agency Contacts for Central Florida's Lake Region

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC) Invasive Plant Management Section

South Florida Field Office, Bartow FL

Main Office: (850) 617-9430

Permitting Staff: (863) 534-7074

South Florida Water Management District

Polk, Highlands, Osceola and Orange Counties

1-800-432-2045

Southwest Florida Water Management District

Polk, Highlands, Pasco, Lake and Marion Counties

1-800-423-1476

St. Johns River Water Management District

Lake, Marion, Orange
and Osceola Counties

1-800-451-7106

Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) District Offices

FDEP Central District

Lake, Marion, Orange
and Osceola Counties

(407) 897-4100

FDEP South District

Highlands County

(239) 344-5600

FDEP Southwest District

Polk and Pasco Counties

(813) 470-5700

Local Municipalities

Highlands County:

(863) 402-6500

Lake County:

(352) 742-3950

Marion County:

(352) 671-8900

Orange County:

(407) 836-1400

Osceola County:

(407) 742-0400

Pasco County:

(727) 847-8171

Polk County:

(863) 534-7377

Southwest Florida
Water Management District

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