



## Natural Areas Policy Statement (Amended 3/16/17)

The following policy statement concerns the District's conservation areas and environmentally sensitive areas which serve as natural buffers, and are scattered throughout the Lexington Oaks community. This policy is consistent with applicable local, state and federal law, regulatory requirements and permits governing the use and maintenance of upland and wetland conservation areas within the District.

The upland and wetland conservation areas owned by the District are not intended to be maintained. They are to remain untouched and in their natural, vegetative, hydrologic, scenic, open or wooded condition, allowing nature to take its normal course. The regulatory goal is to prohibit and/or minimize disturbance to these natural areas. Any vegetation that dies or is damaged by storms or other "acts of God" must remain in its existing configuration within the conservation areas to fulfill its role in nature's process. Neither the District, nor any abutting property owner or anyone else is allowed to enter or encroach into these natural conservation areas for reason of maintenance, cutting or removing vegetation of any type, or for placement of personal property or yard debris.

Within or immediately adjacent to such conservation areas, trees that have died and/or appear to pose a threat of falling and damaging an abutting property owner's property may be addressed by the abutting property owner. However, the abutting property owner must first contact the Pasco County Development Review Division and/or the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) to assess the threat and obtain a permit for any corrective work. Once written permit approval is obtained, trimming or removal from adjacent private property may occur at the expense of the affected property owner.

In the event a tree falls on private property, the affected property owner has the right to cut back or "limb" the tree back to their individual property line, after first obtaining a permit for the work. The remainder of the tree in the upland or wetland conservation area may not be cut or removed, and must be left alone. Removal of native vegetation within and immediately surrounding these areas is restricted and prohibited by Pasco County and (SWFWMD), to maintain natural conditions in these areas.

The above policy statement may be amended as determined by the District's Board of Supervisors.