

LIVE IN HARMONY WITH HOA'S WETLANDS

Content by provided by the Villages at Godley Station

The Villages at Godley Station Homeowners Association owns 281 acres of common green spaces throughout the neighborhoods of The Arbors and Copper Village. This land accounts for nearly half of the total acreage of the whole community, and includes ponds, lagoons, wetlands, stormwater catch basins and drainage ditches, all of which are also maintained by the HOA.

Importance of protecting wetlands

Much of the HOA's land is comprised of wetlands, which are areas where water covers the soil, or is present either at or near the surface of the soil, all year or for varying periods of time during the year. Wetlands are beneficial for a variety of reasons, including flood control, sediment control, nutrient cycling, maintaining wildlife habitats and recharging groundwater. So, it's important for these swaths of land to be cared for properly. The HOA takes this responsibility seriously and maintains wetlands in several ways, such as protecting the healthy native plants growing there, which benefits local water quality.

According to the HOA's covenants, the HOA has designated an easement of access on the wetlands and on the lands adjacent to or within 100 feet of the wetlands (but not the dwelling units thereon). Thus, homeowners cannot build on or fence the wetlands themselves, even if they butt up against a homeowner's property line. No property owner within the community owns wetlands, so homeowners are free to build on their own property (but still must follow proper architectural review protocols and approvals). No projects, such as fences, sheds, swing sets or other outdoor structures may encroach on adjacent wetlands.

Follow these steps before you build

When building a fence, a homeowner must obtain the approval of the architectural review committee (ARC) before construction begins. Any fence constructed before approval will be subject to immediate removal at owner's expense in addition to any imposed HOA fines. The ARC has the right to make individual variances to each of these requirements on a case-by-case basis and upon a homeowner's request. During this process, the ARC will verify that the fence to be built does not encroach on any wetlands or other protected HOA property. After obtaining approval, it is the sole responsibility of the homeowner to obtain a building permit from the City of Pooler prior to starting fence construction.

In addition to location verification by the ARC, other rules govern fence installation, such as materials, colors, height and style. Those specifications are in the HOA's Rules & Regulations document, on the website, GodleyHOA.com.

If you've built a fence on a wetland

Homeowners are responsible for relocating their existing fence to a position within their own property boundary. If, in any future survey of HOA common spaces, any fences are found to encroach on HOA or a neighbor's property, the homeowners will be subject to violation fees and required to remove the fence at the homeowner's expense.

The wetlands surrounding our community are mostly privately owned by the HOA, although some residents' property borders other neighboring HOA and city-owned land. Under private ownership, land designated as wetlands relies on the owner to abide by the associated regulations. In general, it is not permissible to change the land without proper permitting. With reference to fences encroaching on those HOA wetlands, they are subject to the same

encroachment restrictions as a non-wetland property. The HOA generally discourages homeowners from 'managing' the common space, by clearing trees or brush, mowing, watering or planting in any of the HOA property.



These wetlands, surrounding the lagoon near the clubhouse, are part of the 281 acres of common green space owned and maintained by the homeowner's association.