

Juno Beach Ecology Group

Pelican Lake Workshop Report

A walk around Pelican Lake took place on Wednesday, May 11, before the scheduled Workshop. In attendance were Sean Patton (Environmental Consultant), David Dyess (Town Manager), Steve Hallock (Director of Public Works), David Johnson (Town Arborist), DD Halpern (Town Council member), Dr. Ross Wilcox (scientific advisor for the Ecology Group), Diana Davis (Ecology Group President) and Red Dunn (Ecology Group Board member). Perhaps the town could invite the public to join its next lake walk with Sean.

Maintenance of the Cattails

There is a need for maintenance of the cattails, as they are fast growing and need trimming on a routine basis. Sean suggested that overtime that the cattails could be replaced in part with native bullrush that is not as aggressive in its spread, and that serves the same function for bird rookery and filtration of the lake outfalls. However, it has to be considered that the cattails at the south end of the lake are home to a host of birds that sing at sunset. A half dozen black puff ball chicks with tiny red beaks, supervised by their noisy mother gallinules, greeted us as we walked by the cattails. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act prevents the Town from disturbing any nests, so these cattails must be gradually removed through periodic maintenance, but not totally removed as not to disturb any nests. According to Sean, these cattails at the south end of the Lake are also serving an important function of filtering the stormwater runoff in this location.



Momma Gallinule scolding her chicks - photo by Ellen Grannis

Shoreline turf grass

Further suggestions by Sean Patton, environmental consultant included getting rid of turf grass (St. Augustine) at the lake shoreline, as it allows or promotes spread of torpedo grass, which is an invasive species that murders the native ones by spearing it with its "torpedo" like root to takeover. The turf grass could be replaced with short growing no-mow native plants, like frog fruit, sunshine mimosa, blue-eyed grass, and creeping sage.

Erosion Control

Just north of the south gazebo are an area where aquatic plants were needed to stabilize shoreline erosion such as golden canna lilies, fire flag, duck potato, savannah iris, and native crinum lily, in addition to spike rush and pickerel weed that are already thriving around the lake.

For the rock-filled spill way, north of the south gazebo, Sean suggested planting Walter's viburnum, shiny coffee and native pop ash, in addition to continue with the removal of the non-native snake plants.

Trees

Together, the group reviewed various existing trees: pitch apple, poison beauty leaf and a Madagascar olive. Sean recommended that as they die, they should be replaced with native trees. As an aside, in 2004-05 when the hurricanes came through, nurseries of native trees were destroyed, so the Town decided to re-plant available fast-growing shade trees.

The Ecology Group suggests replacing some of these non-native, messy, poisonous trees around the Lake on an annual basis. Sean's suggestions included Geiger trees, spiny olive trees, and gumbo limbo trees to improve our lake landscape. Sean also suggested not trimming the sable palms and to have the Town give specific instructions to landscapers to either not trim the fronds at all, or not to cut above the 9-3 line.

Native Pilot Planting Area

The last stop was the new native planting area on part of the northwest shore of the lake. Sean was very happy with the results, both beautiful and thriving. He suggested alternative land preparation methods, such as using weed cloth and burlap for shoreline stabilization, and removal of more of the St Augustine turf grass from this location and for future locations of these pilot plantings.

Stormwater Drainage into Pelican Lake

The Ecology Group asked for a timeline for Celestial Way drainage improvements, such as permeable pavement and improvement of swales and improvement of drainage locations going into the lake. Initially, it was thought that having both the County drainage project on Ocean Drive and the Town drainage project on Celestial occurring at the same time would result in cost savings to the Town.

At the workshop, it was surprising to hear that we do not yet have engineering drawings for Celestial Way drainage improvement project, and we are still chasing grants to pay for the work. Where is the sense of urgency? The lake sampling that was completed in August 2021 showed the greatest need for stormwater mitigation was from Celestial Way, and it was in the budget for this year.

The new improved drainage project for Ocean Drive (County funded project) is now planned to discharge at a location south of the gazebo, instead of under the gazebo.

Do we need a walkway over the lake or some other structure to go over the new discharge pipe to hide it? Or are we going to be satisfied looking at the pipe discharging into the lake?

Ecology Group Requested Improvements

The Ecology Group would like the installation of floating logs for turtles to climb onto in the lake. We would like to explore the costs of floating islands for water filtration and bird nesting locations. We are also interested in replanting water lilies.

Save the Date – All are Welcome

Wednesday May 17th – Bird Walk - 8:00 AM with Dr. Ross Wilcox, meet at Pelican Lake North Gazebo, bring binoculars.

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Pelican on Pelican Lake photo by Ellen Grannis



Ecology Group Board members, Science Advisor and Community Advocate: Jim Ferguson, William Kimball, Marianne Hosta, Ross Wilcox, Diana Davis and Red Dunn

Photo by Andy Spilos

OUR MISSION

Recognizing that quality of life is linked to a healthy environment, our mission is to promote environmental best practices that foster a healthy ecosystem and support the conservation, protection, and sustainability of our natural resources.

Newsletter by Diana Davis, President Ecology Group