



Ballantrae Newsletter Online

From the Ballantrae Community Development District in Land O' Lakes, FL

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How we manage Ballantrae's CDD conservation areas

Maintenance with a purpose ...

Conservation areas often require monthly, quarterly, or annual maintenance. Invasive vegetation is often introduced, unintentionally, through new community construction to conservation areas through fill dirt which is imported to build infrastructure and house pads. Over a period of time, this invasive vegetation will begin to encroach into residential property creating a multitude of hazards. These hazards may range from snakes and insects to allergens, collectively known as the invisible enemy. Maintenance programs for these conservation buffers can not only reduce these effects, they can also create an aesthetically pleasing backdrop when managed properly.

"Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land."
-- Aldo Leopold

2 most powerful warriors: patience and time ...

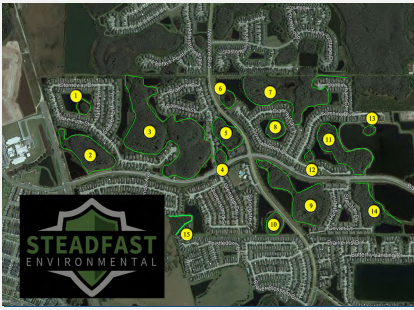


Invasive vegetation growth did not occur overnight within the conservation buffers. It will not be an overnight remedy to restore them. Significant conservation buffer cutback efforts began in Ballantrae in late February of 2018. Over 40,000 linear feet of conservation area was targeted for removal of invasive vegetation. Ongoing maintenance efforts by the initial contractor consisted of a "blanket" herbicide technique which was nonselective in manner. Results from this effort did not allow for propagation of native, low-lying, beneficial vegetation to reclaim the conservation buffer.



If nothing changes, nothing changes

Currently, Steadfast Environmental is maintaining the conservation buffers with a [science-based approach](#) to reclaim these conservation buffers. Rather than "blanket" spray each buffer, technicians are working hard to spot spray only invasive growth while encouraging new, beneficial growth to propagate and take up root space otherwise utilized previously by invasive species. Although there is sometimes collateral damage, efforts toward new, green re-growth are positive.



Pictured left: the conservation map indicating 15 areas of maintenance within CDD Boundaries



Pictured right: a stand of new fern growth taking valuable root space previously utilized by invasive growth.



Pictured above: Newly sprouting Fern and assorted native grass growth can be observed within Conservation Maintenance area #6 along Mentmore Blvd.

Pictured right: Fern growth is in the early stages of propagation outward, growing towards the sod line. This is exactly the intention of the revised maintenance program. Within months, we anticipate these areas will be consumed with desirable growth.

Technicians on-site have a delicate situation on hand when controlling and maintaining growth within these conservation areas. Ballantrae CDD has spent time, efforts, and funds to reduce and eliminate invasive vegetation growth from the conservation buffers as a best management practice. It is the responsibility of the vendor who is controlling and maintaining these areas to ensure we protect that investment

An area of conservation may flourish and appear green one day, and dead the next. This is due to the type of vegetation that is being targeted, we need to work on eliminating the invasive growth while encouraging native, low lying species. If the vegetation is targeted, sprayed, and appears dying, it was part of the original issue that led to community wide cutbacks. Our responsibility is to avoid that process ever again.



Editor's note: This article was written by [Joseph Hamilton](#), owner of [Steadfast Environmental LLC](#), which manages Ballantrae CDD ponds and other areas.