

MEHOA Pond Team Update - Summer 2022

- *In January 2021 your recently elected BOD asked for volunteers to be on a Pond & Wetland Team, to not only monitor our beautiful natural resources, but also to work towards finding successful protection options for the tubes. Several residents offered to serve and all of our team members live on our ponds.*
- *The Pond & Wetland Team spent many hours during February and March 2021 meeting on six occasions with various organizations who have Geotube knowledge and experience. (photos were taken and extensive reports from each meeting were submitted to the BOD). This information and photos have been posted on our website.*
- *Problems and concerns were discussed with each professional representative and all stated that there was **no one fix or solution**. Our ponds are “retention ponds” which prevents a constant water level from being maintained. Every retention pond has different soil and water chemical composition, thus making successful aquatic planting a challenge. (**not all plants ‘take’ in various conditions, even in multiple ponds within the same subdivision**). The common theme from all of the professionals that were consulted with was, **“it will be a trial and error”** process because of these factors. As such, each trial must be conducted through the change of seasons and growing conditions.*
- *Now with a starting point and base-line, the Pond & Wetland Team planted sod pieces, as directed during their meetings with professionals, over the tubes in two areas of both ponds in July 2021. Photos were taken and the sod was closely monitored. Summer rains subsequently filled the ponds. In October 2021, as water levels receded, the Pond & Wetland Team inspected and analyzed the sod placement areas discovering the sod had died because of water submersion. **Sod requires oxygen to live**. Photos were taken and documented. It’s important to note that this is not a new problem. It’s actually a recurring problem. Tube exposure has been noted every year since 2014/2015 after the water recedes during winter months. It’s important to note that new sod was never installed by any BOD during the years that the exposure of the Geotubes began to be documented. As a result, your BOD in 2021 and 2022 have inherited these existing conditions.*
- *At the same time as the sod experiment pieces were placed in July 2021, Solitude chose and planted our first experimental aquatic plant improvement. (They were a type that are considered ‘hearty’ and have been successful in other developments). Unfortunately, those reeds did not survive in our ponds. Again, proof of the process being **trial and error**.*

- **This ongoing process takes a long time and there are no short cuts.** It takes this much time because the success of each attempt needs to be seasonally evaluated depending on the weather and the fluctuation of water level. **Residents should be aware, action is and has been taken consistantly, from early 2021 right up to todays report, trying to address the issue.** Your BOD and Pond & WetlandTeam are 100% committed to working with professionals and researching all possible solutions to the best management of our ponds and wetlands.

We do have written documentation from Landshore (tube installation company for our Big pond) who checked those tubes in Feb 2021.

Landshore clearly states that these tubes are currently in fine shape, leading us to believe that there is no urgency or imminent failure of the tubes. Therefore we should continue the trial and error method suggested to us at several of our meetings. (To Quote Landshore) “At this time, we do not recommend any additional items for coverage (sod, plantings, rock rip-rap, etc.). The only purpose these items would serve is aesthetics and would not contribute much to the longevity of the installation.” You can read the entire letter on our website.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE”

- **We continue to seek viable, long term solutions.**
- To date our Pond & Wetland Team, with full support from the BOD you elected in November 2021, has meet and/or has in depth conversations with Solitude, Erosion Barrier, Sarasota County - SRQ Neighborhood Environmental Stewardship Team, as well as other homeowner associations. We believe that education through open communication with other groups, sharing similar goals, to be of tremendous benefit. These meetings have proven this to be true.
- This month your Pond & Wetlands Team is scheduling meetings to discuss other aquatic plant options. We're hoping that they can offer us new, viable solutions to try. **Solitude was last on site June 27, 2022 treating our ponds which they do monthly.**

- We will be visiting Waterford to tour their ponds and learn about things they have had success with. Waterford allows their Geotubes to be exposed in the dry months. Landshore was also their installer.
- We will be trying a variety of experimental plantings again, hoping to grow something up close to the shoreline, thus producing shade for the face of the tubes.
- We will be setting up additional meetings with the county to review the best possible practices for our ponds and use of their resources.
- On a side note:

We had the opportunity to discuss the small pond with Marthinus H. Le Roux, President of Erosion Barrier, the original installation company. We have the original Warranty document from them stating the tubes needed to be “sodden” and maintained in order for the 20 year Warranty to be effective. Erosion Barrier told us, (to quote) **“We have learned that Geotubes in retention ponds with drastic water fluctuations is not an optimum situation.”** They continued, (to quote) **“That if we go the route of sod, it will definitely have to be replaced every fall after the water recedes and will need to be watered by adjacent homeowners during dry season.”**

The Pond & Wetland Team expressed concern with this approach. One, of several concerns, is that dirt could be added to the ponds annually with this process via dead sod and possible damage by sod securing pins being poked into the tubes. Mr. Le Roux offered his two solutions for Geotube protection. The first, trial and error with aquatic plants and second, the installation of rip-rap, a much more permanent solution.

The Erosion Barrier Warranty for the small pond creates confusion and is a direct conflict with what we have documented from the big pond installation company, Landshore. In spite of this conflict of opinions between the ponds Geotube installation companies, your BOD and Pond & Wetland Team remains committed to protecting these valuable resources.

Even at the time that we are preparing this report our Pond & Wetland Team is researching other Geotube installations. These installations are currently using three tubes as opposed to the two tubes we have in our association. Our work continues and we will continue to provide you with updates.