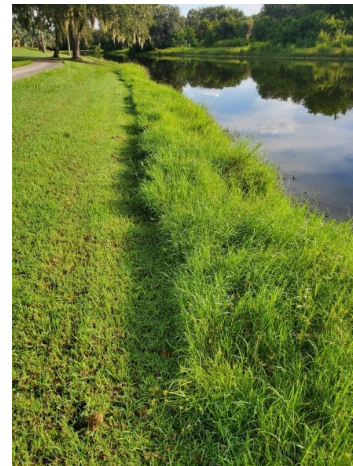
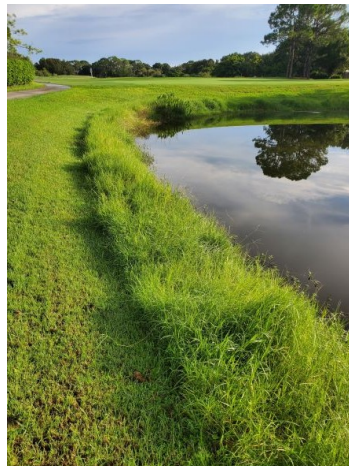
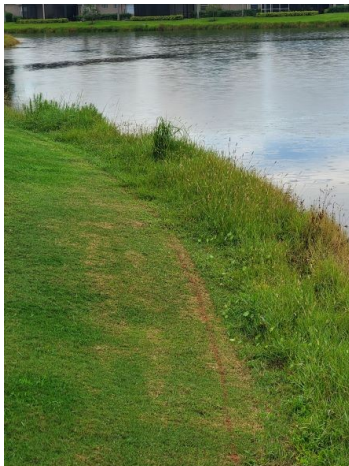


## **The Challenge of Maintaining our Buffer Zone along the Lake Perimeters**

As a reminder, the lakes in Heritage Oaks have undergone substantial bank failure and soil loss over the years. The steep drop from the existing bank to the water is an indication of how much erosion we have experienced. The buffer zone (also called ‘no mower’ zone) was implemented to stabilize the banks and prevent further soil loss as well as reduce the runoff of chemicals into the lake. In addition, the buffer zone will limit the amount of grass cuttings and other organics being blown into the lake (which contributes to excess nitrogen and anoxic conditions that contributed to those nasty fish kills in 2021). The good news is our buffer zone is working! The buffer zone is continually inspected along all lakes on the Golf Course side. The buffer zone we have on those common grounds has already strengthened the bank structure. Since the cost of bank restoration projects can easily run into hundreds of thousands of dollars, this is indeed good news.

Several residents have raised concerns that our buffer zones look unkept and weedy at times. The reason our buffer zones are looking so weedy is twofold: (1) during the rainy season, the turf is quickly going to seed when not being trimmed; and (2) there is a substantial growth of weeds in the turf along the lake perimeter that cannot be managed with chemicals because of the County’s prevention of herbicides within 10 feet of the water’s edge (which is a proper regulation). So, our landscape teams are working to balance the aesthetics along with the effectiveness of the buffer zone using mechanical means. We have established a process whereby HOA landscaping companies will mow up to the buffer zone (~3-4ft). Our common grounds crew will use a reciprocal trimmer to maintain the buffer zone at a higher level than the surrounding turf but to be more aesthetic. During the rainy season of the summer, we can expect rapid growth of the turf in the buffer zone, resulting in more frequent trimming. As the growing season winds down, less frequent trimming will suffice.



We request your understanding and patience as we implement the buffer zone community-wide and tackle the “weediness” appearance of the buffer zone. The changes that we are implementing should result in an improved ecological balance in our lakes, and considerable cost savings for lake maintenance in the future.