

## **Outside Grants Supporting our Healthy Lakes Initiative**

Since 2021, we have been seeking grant funding from various sources to help us with our Healthy Lakes Initiative and facilitate our ecosystem restoration efforts. Our least productive efforts have been in submitting two grant proposals (\$10,000 each) to the Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership (C&HNEP) where our discharge empties into Dona Bay near Venice. Both grant applications were rejected for one reason or another. We currently (as of 2026) have been awarded \$34,000 in outside grants.

Our best success has been through the Healthy Pond Collaborative (HPC) under the START (Solutions to Avoid Red Tide) non-profit where grants have come from the Barancik Foundation and the Gulf Coast Community Foundation. The first grant was \$6,000 which was used as our initial project in the lake along the fifth fairway. These monies were used for the planting of beneficial plants in the littoral zone (shallow water around the perimeter of the lake). As part of this grant, we partnered with Florida Lakewatch operating out of the U. of Florida where we provide monthly water samples, and they conduct the analyses to provide the data to us (essentially \$12,000/year in free services). While we will continue with the UofF analysis support for that particular lake, we now have a multiparameter water quality analyzer we can use in our lakes to measure nutrients, algae, and oxygen in the water as we need to. This will save us a substantial amount of money in contracting out water analysis support (saving \$1,000/lake/sampling).



Because Heritage Oaks is considered a leader in water restoration efforts throughout Sarasota County, we have been able to continue our collaboration with START/HPC in conducting other projects. We have been awarded \$5,000 for littoral plants in the lake along Mahogany Ave, as well as \$8,000 to help support our Microforest project along the non-residential side of the lake and adjacent to Lorraine Road. The combination of littoral plants along with a more substantive buffer zone with shrubs rather than turf will better control nutrient runoff and provide more stable banks.

Recently, we were awarded another \$10,000 from START/HPC for littoral zone plantings for the lake along Mahogany and the lake behind Hyland Hills, which is one where fish habitat is lacking and we want to provide more habitat and control the input of nutrients.