

What we all should know about the lagoons in our neighborhood

THEY ARE NOT OURS Our circumstances regarding ownership and responsibility of lagoons is not unique to Island West. There are other managed communities nearby that were developed after the golf courses were built, as ours was. Most of the lagoons were created as part of the course and were engineered to aid in rainwater distribution. After development the courses were required to exist as good neighbors.

THE LAGOONS CAN BE DANGEROUS As any open body of water can be a drowning hazard, so too are the lagoons. Small children should ALWAYS be under close adult supervision when near them. They also can be the natural habitat for dangerous animals. Poisonous Water Moccasins are known to be there, and copperheads stay near the water's edge especially in times of dry weather. Alligators live in the lagoons but can be dangerous if fed or molested (which is against SC law). It is always wise to keep a safe distance including your pets from the lagoon banks. A good practice if your property adjoins a lagoon.

YES, FISHING IS ALLOWED AT YOUR OWN RISK There are some that are willing to take their chances with fishing in the lagoons. Fishing is not encouraged by the HOA because of safety concerns. South Carolina requires anyone over the age of 16 to have a current fishing license. This applies to all bodies of water including our lagoons. All persons that fish in the lagoons MUST be aware that they are on private property owned either by the golf course, the HOA or our residents and should have permission to do so.

Remember, if someone is on your property and gets hurt you could be liable. If asked to leave and they refuse, please contact the Sheriff's non-emergency number and ask for assistance.

THE LAGOONS ARE MEANT TO BE NATURAL WATER FEATURES They are influenced by Mother Nature and us. Aquatic plant growth such as algae is a natural occurrence and increases and decreases due to such natural things as heat and humidity, rain and drought, sunlight and decaying organic matter.

Chemical runoff from both the golf course and private adjacent homes adds a significant catalyst to this mix. The Department of Natural Resources requires the golf course to maintain a 'natural barrier' to filter some of that runoff. You see that in the various plants that border the fairways at the water's edge. Homeowners do not have this requirement (yet) and all the weed killers, grub control, fire ant poison and especially the wide range of fertilizers all find their way into the lagoons.

Constant control of their purity is almost impossible from most financial standpoints, but when the balance is upset, companies exist to temporarily stabilize the growth of harmful and non-esthetically pleasing vegetation. In some cases, sterile, vegetation-eating fish have been introduced to help in the on-going battle with nature. The golf course retains just such a company and the HOA also contracts with them to keep the lagoon we are responsible for as well. When vegetation grows to a certain point, chemicals are introduced to temporarily control the growth. Constant chemical feeding would severely impact the fish, fowl and animal inhabitants. The HOA also employs a fountain to keep the water in constant motion and to inject oxygen into the water to keep it healthy. Fountains in every lagoon would be nice but they are costly and not practical in every lagoon.

THEY ARE OUR PRIMARY RAINWATER ESCAPE CONDUIT The lagoons are connected and were engineered to form a channel for conveying rainwater that can't be absorbed into our soil. A sizable amount of this overflow comes from outside our community from as far as the Buckwalter area. The rainwater flows most visibly in the trenches seen on either side of Island West Drive and other less conspicuous areas through the lagoons and out to a collection point near the Hampton Parkway and then on to the Okatie creek and beyond.

Keeping our lagoons healthy and functioning is critical to our community's well-being, but Mother Nature constantly fights to reclaim and return them to swamps and wetlands. From time to time the esthetic beauty we envision for them runs counter to nature and when it gets too 'natural' it is controlled...temporarily and at a substantial cost.