

June 25, 2016

Re: A Discussion About Alligators in River Wilderness

The Alligator event at Disney earlier this month spurred a discussion at this weeks HOA Board meeting about Alligators in River Wilderness. This letter shares that discussion.

As we all know, we live in Florida. Our River Wilderness Community has 57 Lakes. Since it is Florida, it is very likely that there is an alligator in each of these lakes. These alligators move from one lake to another. In fact, the design of the storm water drainage system has some interconnecting pipes between lakes and preserve areas that alligators can and do use to move among the lakes. Further, there are swampy preserve areas in our community where alligators are present, and these areas interconnect to the Manatee River. In short, alligators live in and move around our community. We must learn to live with them safely.

Here are some guidelines:

Wading or swimming is not permitted in our lakes. NEVER wade or swim in a lake in Florida.

NEVER feed an alligator or any other wild animal, it is dangerous, and it makes them less wary of humans.

Photograph alligators only from a distance.

Do not allow children or pets to drink, swim or exercise near the water.

Leave alligators alone. State law prohibits killing, harassing or possessing alligators.

Never aggravate an alligator with sticks or by tossing objects at it. If you can do that, you are too close to the alligator, LEAVE.

Resident fishing is permitted in our River Wilderness lakes (Catch and Return, you can't keep them). Resident fishing is permitted in the Islands only in lakes behind your own property and at the Community boat dock. When fishing, be on alert at all times for the presence of alligators and move back from the waters edge immediately when you see one.

Property owners must inform ALL guests of the presence of alligators in our waters and ensure that their guests are aware of the need for precautions.

If a particular alligator (over 4 feet) has left the water beyond sunning on the lake bank, and it becomes a nuisance on your property, you can call SNAP at 1-866-392-4286 to remove it. SNAP will kill all alligators they remove. Your authorization is sufficient if the alligator is on your personal property. If it is on common property, SNAP will require approval from the HOA for removal. The HOA will provide approval in any "nuisance" situation. The HOA will not approve removing alligators that are simply "in a lake" or "sunning on a lake bank."

We have all chosen to live in the "wilderness." We share our lakes and preserves with the wildlife around us. This includes otters, snakes, wild boar, fox, coyotes, alligators, and more. We must stay alert to their dangers. Observe them from a distance.

The HOA Board  
Syble DiGirolamo, President