

# STONEYBROOK'S DROUGHT

by Larry Eichert 6/2017

You don't need the weather channel to tell you that it is hot and dry outside. Just step outside the house and feel the heat or look at the plants and grass. The old previous temperature records for January through April set in 1895 have fallen, according to the National Centers for Environmental Information, and we are setting new ones on a daily basis. Then add the fact that we have only had 5.6 inches of rain since January you can understand why there are so many forest fires throughout the state and two currently in Manatee County alone (May 16) The Florida drought index places us at a high of 659 out of a possible 800 by the Florida Forest Service.

Four areas in particular within our community have been hit the hardest by these conditions. They are the wetlands particularly, Haven Harbour Way, just west of New Britton Court; the various retention ponds, especially the one on Golden Harbour Trail north of Brookfield Terrace; the northern end of the berm along the west side of the eastern ditch behind the houses on the east side of Stone Harbour Loop; and finally, the easement sections between housing areas throughout the community because there are no sprinkler systems contained in these areas.

Why are some retention ponds worse than others? This is due to the substratum of the underlying rock formation throughout the community. Stoneybrook sits on a portion of the old prehistoric beech of the developing peninsula which we now call Florida. There are pockets of shells, limestone, sand or a mixture of all three covering a former bedrock area. Some even form karst systems that contain pockets of porous and nonporous layers within an area. Consequently some areas are more porous than others. This can cause pockets of subterranean water to occur above the existing water table level.

The Haven Harbour Way wetland was a mitigated wetland area being supplied with water from the retention pond on the opposite side of the street. Once the water level in the retention pond fell below the piping out-flow, there was no more water being supplied to the system and the existing water in the wetland evaporated. The bad part of it was that the fish had made their nests, laid their eggs and the eggs had hatched into fry. As the water level dropped and fish died, they then became a food supply for vultures, herons, egrets and even spoonbills eating the fry. The fish nests are still visible on the dried up surface of the wetland. The waste products excreted from the birds becomes nutrients in the soil or water, for the plants. Different plants become food for herbivores or microscopic aquatic organisms which can be eaten by fish. The cycle of life continues.

