

Oldfield Natural Resources Policies and Procedures

6/2/2013

Introduction

Oldfield is committed to the application of good principles and policies of environmental stewardship to ensure a healthy, prospering relationship between its human community of residents, guests, visitors and staff and its natural community of diverse species of flora and fauna.

Environmental Goals and Standards

Environmental standards and procedures will be monitored and reviewed by the Oldfield naturalist and the Oldfield Outfitters Center Committee (OCC).

As Oldfield continues to grow it must protect and improve our natural settings. The OCC will provide oversight and work with other committees and management to meet this goal. The OCC will also work with the Sports Club, Golf Committee, Equestrian Center, Outfitters Center and interested residents to improve environmental education programs for all ages.

Oldfield has been an Audubon International Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary for Golf since 2004. This is an education and certification program that helps golf courses protect our environment and preserve the natural heritage of the game of golf. Oldfield expects to renew this certification on an ongoing basis by means of a Site Assessment that reviews:

- Environmental Planning
- Chemical Use, Reduction and Safety
- Water Conservation
- Water Quality Management
- Wildlife and Habitat Management

There are three distinct environmental areas within Oldfield.

1. Conservation Areas (Attachment 1). These are areas deemed as such on the Development Master Plan and original documents of the Club and are areas that are “untouched” and left natural by the Oldfield Club (“Club”) and the Oldfield Community Association (“OCA”). There will be no consideration given for resident-requested changes to Conservation Areas.
2. Residential Pond Areas (Attachment 2). These areas border residential areas and are areas that will be maintained to allow for views of the water and also to consider wildlife needs, including aquatic and non-aquatic wildlife. Plantings should be consistent with these needs and be done in an “undulating” manner (trimming plants to as low as three feet off the ground where necessary) around the ponds to allow for both access and view. An example of this management technique is the marsh views near the Duck Pond. The Club manages all pond banks, except a portion of River pond.

3. Pond Areas Bordering the Golf Course (Attachment 3). These areas are managed by the Club to meet Club guidelines with advice from the Golf Committee. Instead of clear cutting along the entire edge of a pond, appropriate plantings (Cypress trees for example) be interspersed along the edge to allow fish to have a place to hide and birds a place to land.

Attachment 1 – Conservation Area



Conservation areas will be left untouched and protected by the Club and OCA. (4-Post Pond)

Attachment 2 - Residential Pond Area



An undulating plant management program for ponds in residential areas will allow for homeowners to view the water and wildlife while providing for wildlife habitat and protection. (Left of Hole 11)

Attachment 3 - Pond Areas Bordering the Golf Course



Golf course plantings will be managed by the Club and the Golf Committee to help ensure the protection of both wildlife habitat and golfers. (Hole 11)

As Oldfield continues to mature the following environmental concepts and procedures will be instituted to help strengthen and improve the appearance and Audubon concept of Oldfield.

1. The continued planting and management of appropriate environmentally friendly trees, shrubs and grasses around all ponds in Oldfield in a manner consistent with the Oldfield naturalist's findings that they will support wildlife and healthy pond development. Examples would include Cyprus trees to provide shade for aquatic organisms and roosting for aquatic birds in the Duck Pond and other identified pond areas. Along ponds adjacent to the golf course, wildlife and golfer friendly, aesthetic plants should be planted and managed.
2. The OOCC, working with other committees, will make recommendations to the Club management to ensure that all aspects of environmental stewardship and appearance are consistent with the Master Plan, Oldfield Natural Resources Policies and Procedures, and the Oldfield "Concept". Further, the OOCC will provide residents with educational information regarding appropriate landscape plantings that continue to reflect the "Oldfield Concept" (see online Oldfield1732Info&Files).

Wildlife Management

One of the many things that makes Oldfield a special place to live is the importance we have placed on our natural resources and how much we all enjoy viewing the diversity of wildlife in our community. That diversity includes everything from birds, snakes, deer, otter, foxes, mink and alligators, to other native wildlife. Through our management efforts and master plan, we have included wildlife corridors, green spaces, conservation areas, lagoons, and ponds for the benefit of wildlife and the enjoyment of our membership. Many of the homes in Oldfield back up to these areas and, as a result, see more wildlife passing through or frequently appearing in their yards.

In addition, we have also landscaped yards to encourage wildlife to visit the vicinity of our yards. Although we enjoy viewing wildlife, it is important to understand that these are **WILD ANIMALS AND SHOULD NOT BE APPROACHED OR FED**. Oldfield has a wildlife policy that strictly prohibits the feeding or harassment of wildlife. This does not include bird feeders, but is directed at animals such as alligators, raccoons, and foxes. Wild animals are capable of finding food and surviving on a daily basis without our help. They do not need our assistance for food and do not need to be fed. Feeding wildlife only creates nuisance wildlife, or wildlife that loses its fear of us and causes such problems as property damage or personal injury. Nuisance wildlife can be created by leaving food out for them or leaving food outside for pets on porches and other areas, and leaving household trash in containers easily accessed by wildlife.

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Please help us to minimize the hazards created by nuisance wildlife by refraining from feeding wildlife. Please enjoy the diversity of wildlife at Oldfield by observing their natural behavior and enjoying them in their natural setting. With your cooperation, we can continue to enjoy the diversity of wildlife at Oldfield both now and into the future.

Wildlife Policies and Procedures

Oldfield seeks to protect and perpetuate, as part of the natural environment, the native plants and animals of the property and surrounding areas. Equally, Oldfield is concerned with the health of the ecosystem as a whole, as well as the safety of members, residents, guests, and staff.

Fortunately, in many cases, the safety of both the animals and Oldfield can be protected through the use of common sense and application of the following procedures. Although Oldfield has staff trained to internally manage many cases of wildlife emergencies, in some situations, we rely heavily on other agencies that employ professionals to handle wild animals on a case-by-case basis.

By reacting carelessly or flippantly, staff, property owners, or visitors can needlessly be placed in dangerous situations. The following procedures are for handling nuisance wildlife and wildlife emergencies. These procedures incorporate state and federal regulations and require staff and member compliance. Depending on the severity of the situation, residents, guests, visitors and staff shall notify the Staff Naturalist or Oldfield Security, who will then take proper steps.

Alligators

In the Lowcountry, any freshwater body can contain alligators. Alligators are very mobile and often move from pond to pond due to prey availability, dispersal, mating/courtship, and territory disputes.

During these times, alligators can be found in creeks, ditches, swamps, retention ponds, swimming pools, and other areas containing freshwater. When an alligator finds a body of fresh water, they will usually stay, if no larger alligators are around, and there is available food. Most of these alligators are in the 2-4 foot range, however, larger alligators will move around, as well. It is during this time that an alligator can become a nuisance alligator.

IT IS AGAINST STATE LAW TO FEED OR HARASS ALLIGATORS IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Nuisance Alligator - Any alligator that poses a real or potential threat to the safety of residents, property owners, guests, visitors, and staff, due to its location or behavior.

An alligator is not a nuisance animal if it is large or simply occupies an area.

In order to monitor the alligator population, visual surveys are conducted and staff, member, visitor and security sightings and reports are noted and followed up. Behaviors are observed and monitored as much as possible, but with the help of staff and member reports, aggressive and non-typical behaviors can be noted and investigated.

PROCEDURE FOR NUISANCE ALLIGATOR CONTROL

Any sighting of alligators within the boundaries may be reported to the Staff Naturalist for monitoring purposes. It is best for both Oldfield and the alligator if they are not allowed to become a nuisance in high use areas. Any nuisance alligators (as described above) should be reported using the following procedure:

1. Notify Staff Naturalist or Oldfield security. This notification is necessary for tracking and location of nuisance animals in the property. Documentation of nuisance animals is **REQUIRED AS MANDATED BY DNR REGULATIONS**.
2. Upon receipt of report, a site visit will be conducted. On site, one of the following recommendations will be made by the naturalist
 - Capture and relocate the alligator in-house by the agency and permit-designated staff person
 - Leave the animal alone, due to its behavior, size, location and proximity
 - Termination by professional is needed.
3. Upon completion of action taken, a nuisance alligator form must be completed. A Nuisance Alligator tracking form will list date of report, date and report of action taken, and if animal is relocated, relocation site. This report will be filed at Oldfield. An end of the year report will be generated concerning total of nuisance animal reports for each year.

IF AN ALLIGATOR IS APPROACHING PEOPLE, OR IS ON A HOMEOWNERS PROPERTY, PLEASE CONTACT OLDFIELD SECURITY IMMEDIATELY.

In order to comply with restrictions and guidelines set forth by the Department of Natural Resources Permit for Nuisance Alligator Removal, the following restrictions **MUST BE FOLLOWED**.

1. Do not attempt to shoot, capture, or ensnare any alligator. Oldfield has staff authorized to handle nuisance alligators.
2. Do not attempt to restrict the alligator's movements by cornering, surrounding or other methods designed to keep the animal in a "convenient" location for capture.

ALLIGATOR NUISANCE AND CONTROL PROCEDURE

This procedure has been developed as a tool for use in situations concerning nuisance alligators. The goals are:

1. To ensure the safety of residents, property owners, guests, visitors, and staff.
2. To give staff a simple, step-by-step procedure that will efficiently, effectively, and safely handle situations concerning nuisance alligators.
3. To develop educational training for staff concerning alligator biology, habits, etc.
4. To develop a procedure that will allow Oldfield to work within the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) permit guidelines and restrictions concerning nuisance alligators.

White-tailed Deer Population Management

White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) are a common animal found throughout the eastern United

States. Without the effects of natural population controls through predation, deer populations in communities can quickly increase. Overpopulation can lead to browsing damage, landscape and property damage, and increased vehicular accidents.

In order to responsibly manage Oldfield deer populations, we participate in the South Carolina DNR Deer Population Management Program. Deer populations are assessed and monitored by the Oldfield Staff Naturalist, and maintained through annual deer harvests. All deer population data, harvest requests, and method of removal must be submitted to DNR for approval and issuance of a removal permit. By permit requirement, submission of a written report concerning numbers removed, aging data, and related data must be submitted prior to deer harvests. All deer removed must be tagged with a legal deer tag and all edible portions of deer removed must be distributed to an approved local food bank, with proper documentation of distribution to be submitted as part of the permitting process.

Poisonous and Non-poisonous Snakes Procedure

Of the many different species of snakes in the Lowcountry, only five venomous, or poisonous can be found within Oldfield.

They are:

- Eastern Cottonmouth (Water Moccasin)
- Pygmy Rattlesnake
- Eastern Canebrake Rattlesnake or Timber Rattlesnake (same)
- Southern Copperhead
- Eastern Coral Snake

Five of these snakes can exist within the boundaries of Oldfield properties.

It is equally important to remember that venomous or not, most snakes will bite when threatened. A majority of persons bitten by snakes are bitten because they are either trying to catch the snake or kill it. Snakes are an important part of the ecosystem and should not be killed unless it is a direct threat to the safety of Oldfield members, guests, property owners, visitors or staff. If venomous or non-venomous snakes are encountered outdoors along trails, cart paths, golf course, etc., simply walk around, walk away, or give the snake enough clearance to move away.

Due to perceptions about snakes, any snake in an area, which is frequented by the residents/property owner is considered a direct threat. Areas frequented by members include amenity areas, golf course restrooms, buildings, boat/RV storage areas, etc. Because snakes strike when threatened or injured, **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO KILL THE SNAKE**. Vacate the area and contact Staff Naturalist or Oldfield Security immediately.

*Due to the nature of the facility and the boarding of horses, the Equestrian Center is an area where snakes can be a direct threat. Please notify the Equestrian Center Director or Equestrian personnel immediately when encountering a poisonous or nonpoisonous snake in or around the Equestrian Center. Please note: If the Equestrian Center staff is unavailable, contact Staff Naturalist or Oldfield Security immediately.

Nuisance Wildlife

Wildlife can be seen in and around all areas of Oldfield. Through their natural habits, some wildlife (raccoon, opossum, armadillo, etc.) may cause damage to property such as landscaping, buildings, driveways, etc. Wildlife may also become a nuisance in their search for food by getting into trash receptacles, under houses, in garages, etc. In order to prevent this, the following actions are recommended:

- Make sure all trash receptacles are covered with a tight-fitting lid and trash is not stored in them for extended periods
- Do not feed pets outdoors or leave food in garages, porches, or other areas that are accessible
- Do not attempt to feed any wildlife, with the exception of birds by using squirrel-resistant bird feeders, etc.

Even with precautions, animals may still persist as a nuisance. Nuisance animals are defined as any animal that repeatedly damages or destroys property or is frequently encountered in the close proximity of a home, resulting in animal/person encounters that may lead to a possibility of injury. **NUISANCE WILDLIFE DOES NOT INCLUDE PEST SPECIES SUCH AS RATS, MICE, INSECTS, ETC THAT ARE NORMALLY COVERED UNDER STANDARD PEST CONTROL PRACTICES.** In these cases, it may require that the animal be trapped and/or removed. In this situation, please contact the Staff Naturalist to discuss the proper steps to proceed with for your situation.

*Please note: Due to the beneficial nature of bats, they are not defined as pest species and are included with the wildlife species that may become a nuisance. Also the discharge of a firearm for wildlife removal purposes is prohibited, except by board authorized personnel.

Injured Wildlife

Wildlife injuries can range from life threatening to very minor and no policy can cover all situations. When in doubt, consult Staff Naturalist. Injured wildlife should always be reported, threatening or not. As a general rule, if the animal looks like it could continue to survive, leave it alone. Under no circumstances should you approach any wild animal, threatening or not!

If an injured animal becomes a serious threat, please take the following steps:

1. Oldfield security or Staff Naturalist shall be notified immediately as to the presence of a serious threat.
2. Depending on the severity of the situation, Oldfield security shall notify the Staff Naturalist, who will then take the proper steps to contact the correct agency.
3. After the situation is under control, an incident report shall be completed and routed by the Staff Naturalist.

Nests and Dens

Trees that are likely to have active nests or dens, but have been marked for removal or limbing, pose a special problem. There is a specific procedure regarding limbing and removal of trees within Oldfield properties in relation to our tree removal policy. When babies are present, the animal is much less likely to leave the nest or den. Therefore, the tree or limb which has been determined to have a nest or den in it shall not be removed or limbed until the babies have left the nest or den unless the tree or limbs pose an immediate threat. If it is not in an area frequented by members and guests, the area may be flagged off, so as to exclude traffic from that area, complete with a company sign that informs every one of the company's awareness and action.

Procedure for nests and dens:

1. The Staff Naturalist and/or Oldfield Security shall be notified about the presence of a nest or den in a marked tree. A decision shall be made regarding the safety for property owners and well being of the wildlife.
2. Upon the decision, the appropriate action shall be taken.
3. If the nest contains a federally or state protected species, under no circumstances will any action be taken until the proper authorities are contacted.

Baby Animals

Very young animals and birds, particularly birds, sometimes seem to be separated from their parents. In most cases, the parents are hiding nearby to continue to care for their young. Do not approach or pick up the baby bird or animal. Many animals such as alligators, mammals, and birds of prey protect their young. Although difficult, leave the animal where it is and contact the Staff Naturalist.

If a baby animal is removed from the area and brought to Oldfield Security or staff, find out where the animal was located and contact the Staff Naturalist immediately. Unless injury is evident, the animal should be taken back to the area where it was first found.

Banded and Tagged Wildlife

Many organizations use banded or tagged wildlife for research and information. Animals most banded or tagged are birds and fish (saltwater). If an animal is found dead with a tag or band, remove it and take the following steps:

1. Only remove a tag or band from a dead animal.
2. Place tag or band in an envelope with information about where found, if possible, how it died, etc.
3. Give the tag or band to the Staff Naturalist who will return the band or tag to the proper authority.

Endangered or Threatened Species

Endangered and threatened species can be found throughout the Lowcountry. State and federal laws protect these animals and plants. Any molesting or harassing of an endangered or threatened species can result in state and federal prosecution. This includes feeding of wildlife.

State and federal laws protect the following animals, which can be found in Oldfield:

- American Alligator
- Wading Birds
- Migratory Birds
- Birds of Prey
- Marine Mammals
- Sea Turtles
- Diamondback Terrapins

Feeding of Animals

All animals are attracted to garbage and food. Feeding of wild animals affects the well being of the animals and creates a nuisance and safety issue. Animals that have been fed approach people and pose a serious threat to the safety of park visitors. Large animals, such as alligators, that approach people due to feeding must be removed and eradicated. With the exception of birds, Oldfield does not allow the feeding of any wild animals. Also it is State Law prohibiting the feeding of alligators.

Construction Sites

Raccoons, foxes, opossum, and other wildlife are in the process of raising young and are actively teaching young to forage for food. It is during this time that they will visit construction sites searching for an easy meal and teaching this behavior to their young, creating a nuisance problem for contractors and for Oldfield.

At Oldfield, we have a strict wildlife policy for the neighborhood that prohibits the feeding or harassing of any wildlife. This policy not only applies to Oldfield members, but it also extends to staff, contract workers, construction staff, and any visitors to the Club. It is important that this policy is followed and that each general contractor takes immediate action to eliminate food, litter, food containers, etc. from job sites on a daily basis. This garbage must be kept separate, removed, and not placed in job site dumpsters.

It is the responsibility of the general contractor to assure that each job site and its workers are compliant. Workers should be instructed to not approach or feed any wildlife (no matter how harmless it may seem).

Due to this commitment to our natural resources, the following policy must be followed:

1. All food/drink and food/drink containers must be removed from the construction site on a daily basis.
2. Feeding and/ or harassing any wildlife within Oldfield is prohibited.

Fines:

- • First offense for not complying with the above regulations will result in a \$100.00 fine.
- • Second offense is an immediate cease and desist of any and all work. This cease and desist order will remain in effect until a meeting is held with the general contractor.

It is the responsibility of the general contractor to communicate this information to each and every subcontractor that works on his/her site and assure his or her compliance. All fines will the responsibility of the general contractor.

Natural Resources Removal

Oldfield does not allow the removal of any wildlife or trees, shrubs, wildflowers, or any plant species to be taken from any parks, wetlands, Club or OCA properties within the boundaries of Oldfield. The only exceptions are legally caught fish, shrimp, crabs, and animals taken with the proper authorization of state and federal permits, licensing, and permission.