

## When You Live Next to a Preserve

You probably already know that the preserve or wetland behind your home has a variety of rules and regulations. These rules are enforced by several government agencies. The list of rules is too long and technical to describe in this article.

The only rule you need to follow is this. Don't do anything without written permission. Verbal permission from anyone (including government officials) does nothing to protect you from possible violation fines.

Typical cost of a violation however well intended usually starts at \$2,000. The highest I have heard of in this area was \$95,000 for cutting a group of large trees to improve a view.

Some people tend to extend their back yard in to the preserve by mowing just a little further into the preserve. Other people "clean up" the preserve for a variety of reasons. The government agencies don't care about your reason or motivation.

Any unauthorized activity in a preserve is called an "intrusion". Here are some of the most common intrusions.

Storing anything – toys, lawn equipment, boats, trampolines

Discarding anything – palm fronds, house plants

Mowing (even one foot)

Pruning branches

You may consider certain activity "small", unimportant or insignificant. The agencies don't. One extra foot of mowing, one lawn mower stored or one shrub cut outside of your exact property line can trigger a violation.

I worked on an intrusion in Venice in 2008 where three homeowners "didn't know where their property ended". They mowed back six to twenty feet and planted ornamental plants in a wetland buffer.

The violation required a survey (\$500), a restoration plan (\$400), the actual restoration (\$1,100), a completion report (\$250) and monitoring (\$250 twice a year until the county inspector decided that the area reached success criteria – about two years). The property was owned by the association who paid for the expenses and passed them along to the homeowner.

Since your preserve is probably owned by the community association, contact the property manager with concerns and questions.

Please read [Preserve Q & A](#) for more information.