

THE ROYAL LAKES CROWN



July/August/September, 2013

ROYAL LAKES ESTATES BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Duane Chambers
President

Kristi DeNardo
Treasurer

Tara Masters
Secretary

MANAGEMENT COMPANY

RealManage
Sussan Martinez
2000 S. Dairy Ashford #120
Houston, TX 77077
1-866-473-2573
sussan.martinez
@realmanage.com

Minutes from the Board
Meetings and financial
information is always
available at
www.realmanage.com

*The purpose of this
newsletter is to inform
residents of business issues
in the community, issues
affecting residential and
community property, and
general reference
information.*

Please email articles or
suggestions to:
rlecrown@yahoo.com

ROYAL LAKES ESTATES HAS A NEW COMMUNITY WEBSITE!

REGISTER TODAY AT
www.royallakesestates.org
to
stay informed of all the
latest community news and
events.

a message from the President

It is almost time for school to start, signaling the end of summer. Some of us have been away on vacation, while others have been waiting out the Texas heat in the refuge of our climate controlled game rooms. The brave occasionally go outside to take a jog, walk the dogs, or do yard work. I finished my outdoor kitchen construction project before the heat set in and have since been hibernating indoors spending time with my new baby, Lillian.

In between diaper changes and feedings, I spent some time evaluating the lake water levels and discussing the issues with the rest of the Board. I have shared my analysis in a separate article within this issue of the RLE Crown.

The Board has been working to make some necessary repairs to the irrigation system at the entrance to the community. We were able to complete the repairs just before the serious heat set in so that the shrubs and flowers were protected.

Hopefully, the repairs will help to provide the fuel to get the grass growing back on the west side near the railroad tracks.

Enjoy the final days of summer!

Duane Chambers, HOA President



BOARD POSITION TO BE ELECTED AT ANNUAL MEETING

Two years ago I volunteered to sit on the Board of Directors for our HOA. When I first volunteered, I had hoped that I could help maintain and even improve our community. During the past year, I have accumulated some really great experiences and have been able to meet a lot of my neighbors. I have learned about local government, running a business, management of natural resources, and most importantly diplomacy. Our neighborhood is like a small city. There is a ton that goes into making our little city run effectively. Being involved on the HOA Board has been challenging, yet very rewarding. When we meet in November for our annual HOA meeting, the term for one of the three board positions will be expiring.

I hope that you will consider volunteering for this position. If you are interested, please respond to rlecrown@yahoo.com with your contact information.

DO YOU LIKE TO DECORATE?

The Board has received a great amount of feedback after last year's holiday season regarding the desire for more festive entrance decorations. We would like to assemble a Holiday Decorations Committee to finalize our lighting/decorations plan, procure the decorations and materials, and engage and oversee an installation crew. Most of the effort and time will occur in early/mid November. If you are interested in participating on this committee, please respond to rlecrown@yahoo.com with your contact information.

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NATIONAL NIGHT OUT – OCTOBER 1

The [National Night Out campaign](#) is a unique crime/drug prevention event in which communities from all over the United States participate. The local campaign is designed to increase crime and drug prevention awareness, strengthen neighborhood and police community partnerships and inform criminals, that as a neighbor and a community, we are fighting back.

The Royal Lakes Estates HOA would like you to join us for a block party held on Saxonwood Court from 6-8 p.m. on Tuesday, October 1. Turn on your porch light and come sit a spell with your neighbors. Bring your chair, something cool to drink and a dessert to share (i.e., cupcakes, donuts, etc.). An officer from the Fort Bend County Sheriffs Office will also attend to discuss safety in our neighborhood, as well as answer any questions you might have. We hope to see you October 1st!!



YOUR NEIGHBORS AT WORK!!

In case you haven't noticed, needed repairs to our neighborhood seem to be constant. Over the past few years, residents have gotten together to repair broken pipes, the big white fence at the front of the neighborhood, paint mailboxes and the railings on the bridges, and make numerous repairs to the equestrian center, to name just a few. These repairs are done by YOUR neighbors to help save each one of us the cost of hiring a professional.

Earlier this summer, Kristi and Patrick DeNardo, Tara Masters, and Raul Lozano removed the damaged downspouts from the barn and replaced them with PVC. Paul Masters did some plumbing work at the barn. Kristi, Patrick, Raul and Alex Rivas also repaired the gateposts at the entry. Patrick and Tara repaired the split rail fence and Tara painted the entrance gate. Over the past few weeks, Patrick has repaired the gates into the barn, installed cable bracing, and stabilized the gate posts.

As you can see, the same people are doing a lot of work to keep our neighborhood in tip top shape. And just to let you know, Raul and Alex are not residents, but are friends of Kristi & Patrick's who always seem to be there when help is needed. So, if you happen to see the DeNardo's or the Masters', please give them a pat on the back for their hard work and dedication to our neighborhood, not to mention they did all this work in Texas' extreme heat.



Left, Patrick & Raul repairing the rail fencing around the horse pasture. Right and above, Patrick, Raul and Alex repairing the panel fence at the front of the neighborhood.

YOUR HEALTH

The beginning of each year we all plan to live better, eat better, exercise, etc. This page will be dedicated to your health. If you would like to see something special or submit a topic or recipe, please send an email to rlecrown@yahoo.com.

A healthy recipe that all Texans will love.

Classic Texan Salsa

Servings: 12

Ingredients:

1 (14.5 ounce) cans stewed tomatoes
1/2 onion, finely diced
1 teaspoon minced garlic
1/2 lime, juiced
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup canned sliced green chiles, or to taste
3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

Instructions:

Place the tomatoes, onion, garlic, lime juice, salt, green chiles, and cilantro in a blender or food processor. Blend on low to desired consistency.

Source: Allrecipes.com



Meditation is Good for Your Health

After decades of serious meditation research by scientists such as Benson and Kabat-Zinn, the following health benefits of meditation have become generally accepted by the scientific community: Meditation helps the body to rest and regenerate by decreasing the metabolic rate and lowering the heart rate. It also reduces stress and helps with high blood pressure.

Furthermore, meditation has been found to have an array of [health benefits](#). Meditation can help asthma patients, making breathing easier for them. And finally, as Sara Lazar, psychologist at the Harvard Medical School found out, meditation seems to slow down the aging process of the brain and improve the

grey matter of the brain.

Meditation is Pleasant

Another important reason why you should consider meditation is that it can be extremely pleasant. Not only does meditation help to calm and relax the mind, it can even lead a peaceful, even blissful state of mind. Beginners, however, may find that meditation can also be boring, exhausting and even frustrating. But once the initial steps have been taken, most people find meditation to be both relaxing and enjoyable.

Meditation and Therapy

As mentioned before, meditation helps to reduce stress by triggering the so called [relaxation response](#). While practically all meditation techniques calm the mind, many also help to develop an attitude of mindfulness towards one's own thoughts, feelings and body.

This mindfulness can help one see through negative patterns of behavior and thus change them. It also helps reduce negative emotions such as anger, fear, anxiety, greed and depression. Thus, mindfulness and a calm mind can be of great help to anyone with psychological problems or disorders such as depression, anxiety and anger control.

While the positive effects of meditation can be so strong that some people may find they don't need psychotherapy anymore, it can never be a substitute for proper psychotherapy treatment. A psychological disorder cannot and should not be treated with meditation. However, meditation can be a wonderful supplement. Ideally, meditation should be used in combination with formal psychotherapy treatment.

Meditation Makes the Mind More Efficient

According to Richard Davidson, neuroscientist at the University of Wisconsin's Laboratory for Functional Brain Imaging and Behavior, the EEG of experienced meditators shows high-frequency gamma waves, a brain wave pattern associated with higher mental activity, perception and consciousness. Thus, the subjective feeling of calm and relaxed concentration often experienced during meditation can be objectified in the actual brain waves documented in the EEG. *[continued on Page 4]*

ROYAL LAKES ESTATES



State law requires all HOA's to notify members of all Board meeting dates, times and locations. These meetings are open and can be attended by any member wishing to attend. All RLE Board meetings are held the first Monday of each month at the Fort Bend Road and Bridge offices on FM762, unless notified otherwise.

FUTURE BOARD MEETINGS:

September 5 **7:00 p.m.**
October 5 **7:00 p.m.**

Annual Meeting

Meeting will be in November.

Further information will be posted in the neighborhood and on message boards.

here because they love horses, may purchase a horse in the future, or simply like the option of bringing horses from their ranches to our Equestrian Center if they ever choose to do so.

The horses currently stabled at the RLE Equestrian Center include one mare, Dakota (a tri-colored paint), and two geldings, Jethro (a large sorrel thoroughbred), and Montana (the line back dune).

The owners of each of the horses work daily to feed them, muck out the stalls, and care for the horse's grooming and personal needs. The horses are let out to graze each morning and brought in each night, per the RLE Equestrian Center regulations. There may be an occasional night when the horses graze due to the heat of the day or special circumstances.

There are signs posted which request that horses not be fed by other residents. The reason for this is many horses have sensitive digestive needs and can become ill when fed irregular foods on an irregular schedule.

Last year the Equestrian Center was painted and re-roofed after approximately fifteen years of having no regular maintenance. The goal of the current HOA board is to ensure the center is maintained and remains in good repair. The Equestrian Center is an asset to this community. Many families, such as mine, have members of the equine species. Our community is unique and fits the needs of unique families. The Equestrian Center is just one of the ways we meet needs of the families in our community.

If you or your family have any questions regarding the Equestrian Center or would like to meet the horses, feel free to contact RealManage at 1-866-473-2573. They will gladly pass your name and contact information to me and I will contact you as soon as possible.

Take care, Tara Masters
HOA Board Member

The RLE Equestrian Center

Imagine a morning mist coming off a pasture full of wild flowers. Add to the image silhouettes of horses grazing peacefully, the sun rising, and rays of light streaming over the stable, truly a moment of beauty and peace. This is a scene witnessed by the residents of Royal Lakes Estates as we pass the Equestrian Center many spring mornings.

When purchasing a home, our family considered many issues, specifically, we had two four legged members to consider, our horses Dakota and Montana. We found a great real-estate agent (RLE resident Sandy McClusky) who understood our unique family needs. Royal Lakes Estates (RLE) was listed as an Equestrian Community, so we were naturally drawn to this neighborhood.

The RLE Equestrian Center allows our family to stay together. As a member of the HOA board, it has been a pleasure to meet other families who are drawn to RLE because of their own equestrian needs. Many residents have purchased homes

Meditation is Good for Your Health *[continued]*

Meditation for Body, Mind and Spirit

Meditation has many beneficial effects if practiced regularly and correctly. It is healthy to the body, pleasant to the mind and healing to the psyche. It sharpens the intellect and enlightens the mind.

Source: <http://suite101.com/article/why-meditate-a118089>

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Drive Clean Across Texas

Tell your friends and family to enter the "Drive Clean Across Texas" sweepstakes today at [Drive Clean Across Texas](#) for a chance to win a brand-new Ford Fusion Hybrid! The deadline for entering is Sept. 15. The statewide public outreach and education campaign encourages motorists to make no-cost and low-cost changes in their driving and vehicle maintenance behaviors to reduce harmful vehicle emission, save money at the pump and help keep the air clean. The low-emission, gas-saving 2013 Fusion Hybrid car is sponsored by the Dallas Cowboys Football Club, and the winner will be announced as part of pregame festivities at Cowboys Stadium on Sunday, Oct. 6.

Water wisely to pull lawn through this drought

Does your lawn pass the footprint test? Perhaps not, given the drought. If you leave a trail after walking across your grass, it's time to water — wisely. When grass blades look dull, roll and fold and don't bounce back, water slowly and deeply to encourage roots to travel deeper, away from the quickly drying, hot soil surface. If we don't get much-needed rain, repeat weekly to help get your turf through this extremely dry period.

"Contrary to popular belief, lawns do not need frequent waterings," says Doug Welsh of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service. St. Augustine and zoysia need $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 inch a week to stay green. Bermuda requires $\frac{1}{2}$ inch a week. Apply an inch of water and you'll wet our typical clay soil about 6 inches down, Texas A&M experts say. This is adequate for grass roots.




To measure how much your sprinkler waters in a set amount of time, place three to five empty short-sided cans in a line that starts near the sprinkler and continues to the edge of the sprinkler's coverage. Run for 10 minutes, then measure the amount in the cans. Determine how much longer you'll need to water to apply an inch. If you need proof you've done the job, use a trowel to dig a 6-inch hole to check moisture at that depth.

Stretch each inch of water:

- Water early in the morning when it's cooler and winds are calm to minimize evaporation and maximize efficiency. Skip the sprinkler on breezy days. Water by hand or use drip irrigation to get moisture directly to the soil surface and avoid waste.
- Avoid runoff. Don't water the drive and street. If the soil is dry and hard, water runs off quickly. Let the sprinkler run until the water puddles, then turn it off for about a half-hour so the moisture can be absorbed. Repeat the process until an inch of water has been applied.
- Dethatch and aerate the lawn to encourage water penetration and reduce runoff.
- Mow at a higher height. Longer blades need less water, and they shade the soil, conserving moisture. Mow St. Augustine grass at 3 inches, Zoysia at 2 inches, Bermuda at 1 1/2 inch.
- Don't apply nitrogen fertilizers that promote thirsty growth. Leave clippings on lawn to break down and replenish soil nutrients. An organically enriched soil better holds moisture.


Source: [chron.com](#)



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ADDRESSING THE LAKE CRISIS IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD . . .

As you are likely aware, Southeast Texas experienced a severe drought during 2011. The Board attempted to compensate for the lack of rainfall during the 2011 drought by pumping a great amount of water from the community's wells into the lakes. Unfortunately, these efforts did not result in any measurable increase in the water level of the lakes due to the absorption of water into the ground beneath the lake bed and evaporation of the lake water into the air. After paying the fees levied by the Sugarland Ground Water Reduction Program, the community incurred \$41,688 for water usage during 2011.

Weather forecasters are predicting another drought for 2013 and the lake levels were at very low levels as of the end of June. The Board recently explored this matter again in order to re-evaluate this complex issue. The lakes throughout our community serve several purposes including:

- Retention of water drainage from homeowner lots and roads
- Alternative source of water for fighting fires within the community, should they occur
- Visual interest to the landscape of the community
- Recreational use, including fishing and canoeing
- Habitat for wildlife

The Board explored the impact of low water levels on each of these purposes:

Retention of Excess Rainwater

During periods when our area is not experiencing drought conditions, the lake levels are typically maintained by the excess rain delivered from the drainage infrastructure throughout the community. The community was designed to shed water from homeowner lots and community roads to the lakes for retention. During non-drought conditions, typical rainfall run-off is sufficient to maintain the lake levels.

Fire Protection

The Board first considered the role of the lakes in the fire protection for the neighbourhood. There are currently a limited number of fire hydrants throughout the community that are connected to the water utilities. However, there are several valves throughout the community that were designed to allow fire fighters to source water from the lakes. In order for these valves to work, they must be submerged in water. At certain points during drought conditions these valves could be at risk of not being submerged. In order to address this risk, the Board and certain interested residents visited the Richmond Fire Department several years ago to discuss their use of the lakes in fighting potential fires that might occur within the community. The Fire Department representatives indicated that the lake water would be used as a "last resort" to fight fires. Water would first be sourced from available fire hydrants, then from a water truck that accompanies the fire fighting truck. The Fire Department representative expressed concern over the use of lake water valves because past experiences in other communities showed that the valves tend to get obstructed and create delays in fighting fires. Based on the feedback received during this meeting, the Board developed a plan to install fire hydrants that are connected to water utilities. Four fire hydrants are budgeted to be installed each year until sufficient fire hydrants are installed throughout the community to provide sufficient coverage for the Fire Department.

Aesthetics and Impact on Property Values

The aesthetics of the lakes to the overall community appearance and impact on property values were then considered. Properties adjacent to the lakes typically garner higher property values than land-locked properties due to the ambiance that the lakes create for the adjacent homes. Additionally, there are two points within the community where the lakes intersect with the roads that residents travel, one of which is near the entrance to the community. As the lake levels drop, there is risk that underwater infrastructure (ie. pipes, fountain pumps, etc.) and the lake bed become exposed. Empty lakes certainly have a negative impact on lake front ambiance and property values, and likely to land-locked properties throughout the community.

Recreational Use

Based on casual observations, it appears that few residents utilize the lakes for fishing and/or canoeing.

Habitat for Wildlife

Due to the plentiful vegetation, sparse population of humans and lack of development surrounding our community, wildlife is abundant. Ducks, fish, alligators, herons regularly find refuge in our lakes. As the water levels decrease, these animals may seek different accommodations. However, as the water levels rise, the wildlife would likely return as development in surrounding communities continues to encroach on their habitat.

ADDRESSING THE LAKE CRISIS IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD . . . [continued]

Cost to Supplement Lake Water Levels

The Board evaluated the estimated cost of supplementing the lake water levels with fresh water derived from the water wells located within the community for the past ten years. Based on the surface square footage of the lakes within the community (excluding the two ponds at the entrance, which are not fed by community drainage), it currently costs approximately \$27,000 to raise the lake levels by one foot. In the last 10 years, evaporation outpaced the precipitation in 5 of 10 years; however, only 2 of those years experienced reductions of surface water levels of greater than one foot. During 2011 the precipitation to evaporation deficit in the county was 38 inches. (see table below for data) In order to maintain the lake levels during 2011, it would have cost \$82,000 (\$318 per lot or \$901 per lot if only allocated to lakefront lots).

Board Resolution

The Board is committed to maintaining property values, creating a beautiful community, and protecting the natural resources of our community. We have attempted to understand homeowner concerns and have spent considerable time evaluating the situation to determine a response that will best serve the Homeowners' Association. After considering the factors above, the Board has determined that supplementing lake levels with water from the community's water wells is not a responsible use of our natural resources and does not provide a sufficient benefit to justify increasing homeowners' association dues substantially.

Net Gain/(Loss) in Surface Water for Fort Bend County

	Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall	Total	Hypothetical Annual Cost	Hypothetical Cost per Lot	Hypothetical Cost per Lake Lot
2002	3.18	-5.53	2.12	17.46	17.23 \$	-	\$ -	\$ -
2003	3.24	-8.99	-0.48	9.89	3.66 \$	-	\$ -	\$ -
2004	7.21	2.92	2.81	9.56	22.5 \$	-	\$ -	\$ -
2005	4.18	-4.42	-6.48	-5.81	-12.53 \$	26,794	\$ 104	\$ 294
2006	0.82	-5.73	3.26	5.79	4.14 \$	-	\$ -	\$ -
2007	4.28	5.57	9.18	0.6	19.63 \$	-	\$ -	\$ -
2008	2.55	-7.3	-5.82	1.04	-9.53 \$	20,379	\$ 79	\$ 224
2009	0.38	-1.31	-13.96	7.12	-7.77 \$	16,615	\$ 64	\$ 183
2010	2.46	-6.27	1.22	-2.09	-4.68 \$	10,008	\$ 39	\$ 110
2011	1.73	-14.41	-17.21	-8.47	-38.36 \$	82,028	\$ 318	\$ 901
2012	8.32	0.63	-2.15	-6.16	0.64 \$	-	\$ -	\$ -

Footnotes

Total Lake Square Footage	1,905,866***
Gallons Required to Increase Level One Foot	14,255,878****
Cost to Increase Level One Foot @ \$1.80 per 1,000 gal	\$ 25,661 *
Number of Lots Within the Community	258 **
Number of Lake Lots Within the Community	91 ***
Annual Water Budget (Includes landscape irrigation)	\$ 27,000

Annual precipitation and evaporation data based on information from
<http://www.twdb.state.tx.us/surfacewater/conditions/evaporation/index.asp>

Drainage for the subdivision was engineered to divert excess water from home lots and roads to the lakes. As such, lake levels may not necessarily correspond to the above data when heavy rain fall occurs during short periods of time or in clusters

During periods of high evaporation and low precipitation the pumps do not have the capacity to pump the volume of water necessary to outpace the evaporation.

* - Rate per 1,000 gallons based on rates for Out of City Participants in the Sugarland Groundwater Reduction Program though 2013. Beginning 2014 the rate becomes \$2.10 per 1,000 gallons

** - Based on Declaration of Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions For Royal Lakes Estates, Section One and Two

*** - Based on subdivision plats for section one and two

**** Based on conversion rate of 7.48 gallons per cubic square foot