



# SUMTER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Villages Fraud Arrest**

On January 8th, 2021, the Sumter County Sheriff's Office received a complaint from The Villages Community Development District in reference to several acres of damage to the protected wetland on the northern edge of Lake Deaton, located directly behind residences on Valleybrook Way, The Villages, within Sumter County, Florida. According to the initial complaint, a male known as "Louis," operating under his company name "Floridian Curb Appeal," approached several homeowners on Valleybrook Way, offering to clear the property behind their residences for approximately \$1,000 each. The VCDD advised this property belongs to The Villages, and it is a protected wetland via a permit held by the South West Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD).

Sumter County Detectives investigated and identified the suspected male as Jose Luis Carvajal Ibarra (DOB 12/26/1983). A total of fourteen residences were found to be involved, eleven of the fourteen had vegetation cleared by the suspect.



Mr. Carvajal Ibarra approached homeowners, offering to remove and cut foliage in the wetland behind their residences, charging each of the homeowners approximately \$500 to over \$1,000 each. According to the residents, Mr. Carvajal Ibarra provided everyone reassurance of his work's legality. He led them to believe he had prior permission from The Villages to conduct the clearing.

During the clearing operations, the Villages Community Development District representative spoke with Mr. Carvajal Ibarra. They made it clear the property was a protected wetland and that it belonged to The Villages. Mr. Carvajal abandoned the work on that date but began again following the warning. The clearing of the land spanned over several weeks. The total amount of damage is estimated to be between \$40,000 and \$65,000.

During an interview with Mr. Carvajal Ibarra, he recalled the district representative confronting him. He then knew that the property was protected and belonged to The Villages. Mr. Carvajal Ibarra also advised he did not have a permit for home solicitation, required by Florida Statute.

Following an interview at the Sumter County Sheriff's Office, detectives took Mr. Carvajal Ibarra into custody. Deputies transported Mr. Carvajal Ibarra to the Sumter County Detention Center. He was booked for Scheme to Defraud charges, Criminal Mischief, Trespassing, and eight counts of Home Solicitation Without a Permit. Mr. Carvajal Ibarra was issued a \$9,000 bond.

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