


 splash!

quick facts on...

# Keeping the Canal Right of Way Clear

## How you can help...

MAY 2014

**The South Florida Water Management District** is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts.

**Our Mission** is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems, and water supply.

### SAFETY FIRST!

Flood control in your neighborhood depends on well-maintained canals.

This requires that land adjacent to a canal embankment be clear of trees, shrubs, fences and other encroaching objects.

The South Florida Water Management District is committed to carrying out its flood control mission, and we need your help. We manage the primary drainage canal system in our region and maintain the associated lands and facilities. The District has right of way (fee simple or easement) along 2,000 miles of canals and levees, often next to private homes. Those who live adjacent to District canals or connecting secondary canals often add enhancements to the canal right of way. But enhancements may ultimately end up as obstructions and interfere with emergency response.

### The Situation

Our subtropical climate beckons us to enjoy the outdoors. Residents who live along a canal right of way often wish to plant trees or vegetation to enhance the view or set up play equipment or structures. While some right of way uses are compatible and may be allowed with a permit, other uses may seriously impact the District's ability to operate the flood control system.

### The Importance of Proper Drainage

We live in a low, flat place and depend on our interconnected drainage system to remove excess water after storm events, including tropical storms and hurricanes. Vegetation and structures along a canal right of way may end up in the canal and cause blockages around downstream water control structures. In turn, these obstructions will prevent water from properly draining and could result in flooding that endangers the safety of residents in the immediate area and many miles away.

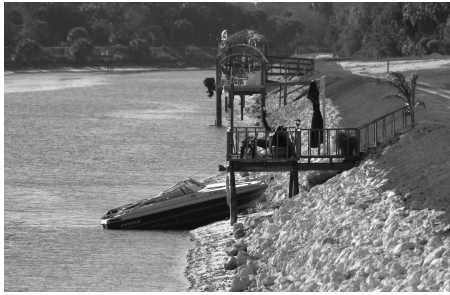


*Trees planted too close to canals may end up as obstructions.*

Field staff must have clear access to canals for routine maintenance, repair and debris removal. During times of disaster and emergency recovery, access becomes even more important as recovery teams have to navigate through the canal system to perform emergency maintenance tasks.

### Using the Right of Way

It is the District's policy to allow adjacent owners to utilize the rights of way, provided the use does not adversely impact or interfere with the District's ability to operate and maintain the flood control system. Use of the District's maintenance right of way is governed by Right of Way Permitting Rules. For example, above-ground structures and landscaping typically must be set back at least 40 feet from the top of the canal bank to allow adequate access and minimize the amount of debris that falls into the canals during storm events. While certain uses of the right of way are considered exempt from permitting, installation of any facility (dock, deck, shed, tree, fence, etc.) within the right of way without a permit constitutes a violation. The permitting process is simple, and our professional staff is available to provide assistance.



Permitting for some right of way uses is required, and structures must be built according to specifications.

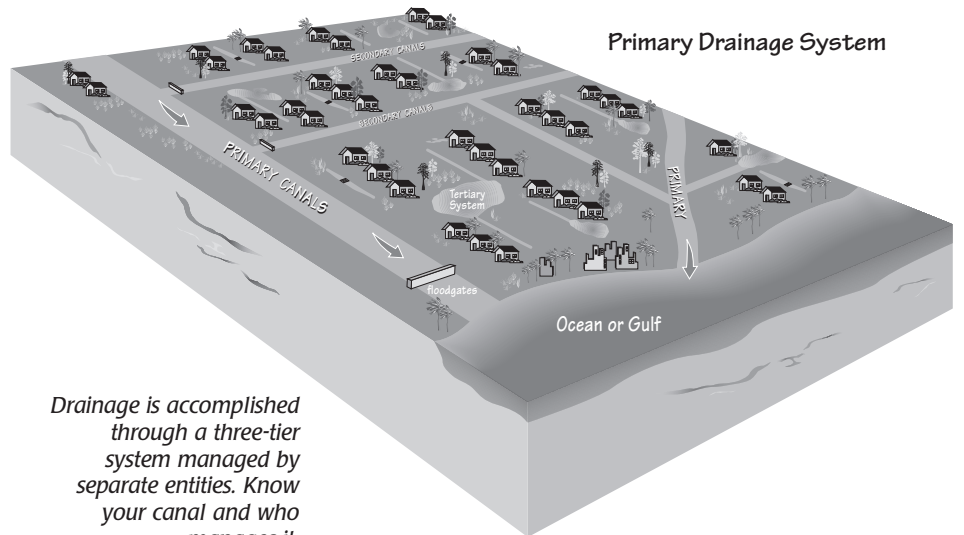
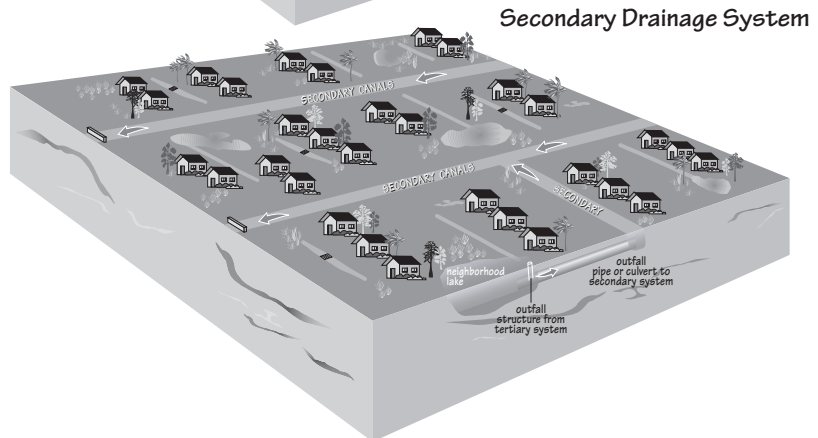
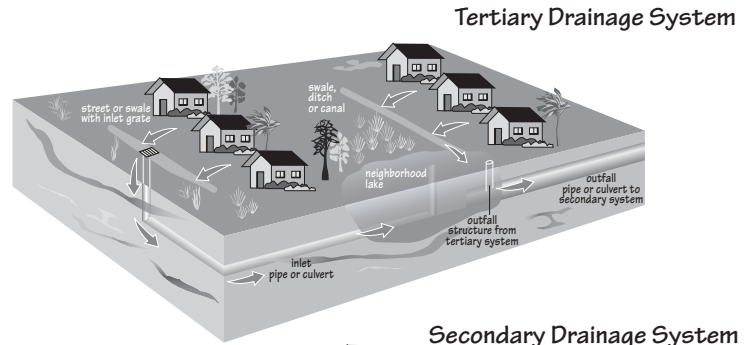
**How Can You Help?**

Know your canal. Do you live on a District primary canal or a secondary canal that is maintained by a municipality or drainage district? District canals are numbered with the prefix “C”, “L” or in a few cases a “G” followed by a number, such as C-12, L-47, C-51, G-15, etc. If you are considering placing a structure or planting trees behind your house, be sure to determine where your property line is. If you are encroaching on a canal maintenance right of way, you must obtain prior approvals from the District or other agency that has jurisdiction.

For District primary canals, you can call our main office at 561-686-8800 (toll free 1-800-432-2045) and ask for our Right of Way Section. Someone can help you determine whether a permit is needed.

Also, you can report violations or potential obstructions. By protecting the right of way, you and your neighbors benefit by avoiding unnecessary flooding in your local area. Let’s all pitch in to help our flood control mission!

To find out more, visit [www.sfwmd.gov/rainyseason](http://www.sfwmd.gov/rainyseason)



*Drainage is accomplished through a three-tier system managed by separate entities. Know your canal and who manages it.*



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[sfwmd.gov](http://sfwmd.gov)

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