South Indian River Water Control District
Drainage Video

Voice-Over

The state of Florida absorbs, on average, about 54 inches of rain each year. In our area, that amount increases to over 66 inches. One year, we got over 105 inches of rain. Now, that's a lot of water to manage.

So, who helps control and manage all that water?

Well, for Jupiter Farms, Palm Beach Country Estates, Egret Landing, and a portion of the Jupiter Park of Commerce it's the South Indian River Water Control District. South Indian River Water Control District is the Florida Special District that provides water management and maintenance services.

The District was established in 1923 to provide the drainage needed to build farms and homes in the watershed of the Loxahatchee River.

Today, its primary function is to maintain and improve drainage infrastructure and to help protect property from heavy rainfall.

South Indian River Water Control District's boundaries encompass 12,400 acres, or approximately 20 square miles, in northwest Palm Beach County. It includes 60 miles of canals and hundreds of miles of roadside swales and ditches.

Here is a closer look at how the drainage systems in our area work. Keep in mind, unlike many gated and planned communities, South Indian River Water Control District's drainage system operates by gravity flow.

And remember South Indian River Water Control District manages and maintains more than 400 miles of swales and canals.

That's six times as wide as the English Channel.

And when it rains, it pours, and here is what happens.

First, the tertiary system does its job collecting and absorbing the water.

The water flows from impervious surfaces, such as roofs, driveways, and roadways into ponds and natural depressions in your yard, as well as into the swales and ditches that are adjacent to or part of your property.

Next, the water that is not absorbed, is handled by the secondary drainage system, or the "gravity flow system".

The gravity flow system leverages differences in elevations, using the energy of natural gravity to remove the water from those areas and swales and move it eastward across the District through a network of maintained canals.

Palm Beach Country Estates has about 15 miles of canals that drain the water slowly, making its way west to east through the canal system and then through four fixed control structures and finally discharging into the Southwest fork of the Loxahatchee River via the Turnpike canals.

Jupiter Farms has 45 miles of canals that drain water west to east through five operable control structures.

Waters then move north to the northwest fork of the federally-designated Wild and Scenic Loxahatchee River.

The final movement of the water is into the primary drainage system, which consists of larger natural systems and regional canals.

Because the terrain in our area is naturally mostly level, the gravity flow system requires careful planning, construction, and maintenance. And sometimes, it moves very slowly.

Now, while it's critical to have an effective drainage system, it's equally important to maintain water storage areas.

In our area, every effort is made to conserve runoff by directing its flow into holding areas in and around the District, such as storage ponds and wetlands, as well as other low-lying areas, including residential properties.

Unlike those huge "man-made lakes" you see in planned communities, out here we rely on landowners' ponds, yards, swales, and ditches as an effective means of providing water storage and protection against flooding.

Collecting excess water in local ponds and swales keeps it away from your home.

So, if you have a pond on your property, you are helping the entire District, as well as safeguarding your property. And when the water sits and percolates, it helps by recharging the freshwater aquifers and protects the well fields.

During and after heavy rainfalls, some standing water is not only normal, but also expected.

And here's why…

If the ground is already saturated and ponds, swales, and canals are high from previous rains, water is going to take longer to recede.

Because our terrain is more dimpled than flat, some low-lying areas in parts of the District may be more prone to holding water and drain slower than other areas, and since all the District water drains into the same interconnected system, that can slow things down.

When the low-lying ground is already saturated, with ponds, swales, and canals high from previous rains, water is going to take longer to recede and will drain slower. Think of a bathtub; it doesn't matter how full it is, the drain will only allow it to drain a little at a time. And for every inch of rain that falls, that means over 347 million gallons of water falls on the District.

There are some other conditions which affect drainage that **you** can help with:

- Remove debris and blockages from your culvert, swale, and ditch areas. Yard waste or damaged driveway culverts can clog the system, so be sure to check these areas periodically.
- And please, don't improperly add fill to your property. It can really mess up the District's drainage and you could end up flooding out your neighbor.

So, it's important that we all do our part.

South Indian River Water Control District maintains an efficient water management system. Year-round, the District is committed to helping create a balance between flood protection, water quality, and water conservation, while keeping in mind that we are part of a much larger system and working to maintain the systems in the communities we serve so we can enjoy our beautiful rural lifestyle.

For more information about the South Indian River Water Control District go to: https://www.sirwcd.org