

South Indian River Water Control District Executive Director's Report for 2023-2024

South Indian River Water Control District (the District) is a Special Taxing District created to operate under the authority of Florida Statue Chapter 298 and serves Jupiter Farms, Palm Beach Country Estates, Egret Landing, and a portion of the Jupiter Park of Commerce. The District interacts with several agencies which include South Florida Water Management District, Palm Beach County, Palm Beach County Environmental Resources Management, the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Department, Palm Beach County Fire and Rescue, Solid Waste Authority, Loxahatchee River District, and the Town of Jupiter. The District also participates as a committee member in several interagency teams that include the Loxahatchee River Management Coordinating Council, the Loxahatchee Preservation Initiative, and the Palm Beach County Safety Council.

The District's primary function is to provide stormwater management. The District's stormwater system functions as a dual basin system east and west of the C-18 canal. Palm Beach Country Estates, Jupiter Park of Commerce, and Egret Landing are east of the South Florida Water Management District's Canal 18. Jupiter Farms is west of Canal 18. East of Canal 18 are approximately 15 miles of canals that drain west to east through four control structures prior to entering the Turnpike Borrow Canals and then is conveyed from the West Borrow through the 706 Outfall Canal and ultimately discharge downstream of the S-46 structure into the Southwest Fork of Loxahatchee Estuary. Palm Beach Country Estates has three connections directly to C-18 via the South Florida Water Management District's project riser culverts.

West of Canal 18 are 45 miles of canals in Jupiter Farms that drain west to east through five water control structures. Waters then flow north to the Northwest fork of the nationally designated "Wild and Scenic" Loxahatchee River. During heavy rainfall events, Jupiter Farms C-14 Canal receives additional discharge from the South Florida Water Management District G-92 structure.

In addition to stormwater drainage, our operations include road maintenance, mowing of roadside swales and canal levees, contractual aquatic spraying in canals, culvert replacements, ditch, and canal restoration.

The District has approximately 90 miles of unpaved roads that require frequent grading and recontouring. Roads are graded weekly and at times, material is brought in to stabilize road surfaces. Throughout the year, roads are checked for shoulder recontouring. This involves pulling the shoulder of the road toward the road center to create a crown. Creating the crown minimizes standing water along the edges of the road during rain events. In addition to District roads, there are private and Palm Beach County roads that are not maintained by the District.

The District also has a maintenance program for District paved roads. Each year, asphalt and open-grade emulsified mix roads are inspected for resurfacing. Roads are resurfaced with either asphalt or micro-overlay. This year, numerous intersections were repaired with micro-overlay while Haynie Lane between Randolph Siding and 167th was overlaid with asphalt. In Palm Beach Country Estates, 68th Drive North, 67th Trail N, 66th Trail N, 65th Way N, and 64th Way N in between 145th Place and 143rd Street N. (AKA: the “Pink Roads”) were overlaid with asphalt. All paving projects are landowner initiated. Contact the District office for road paving petition information.

With 60 miles of canals and 378 miles of roadway easements, the District’s mowing schedule could take 6 to 8 weeks to complete. However, weather, mechanical, or personnel issues can alter this schedule. If a homeowner chooses to mow the ditch themselves, they can call our office to be put on the “landowner maintained” list formally referred to as the “do not mow” list. District operators review this list each day before mowing operations begin. For those who choose to mow their own ditch, please make sure your address is visible for operators to see and bypass your property. Be advised that if a “landowner maintained” property has excessive growth, the operators are instructed to mow the property.

The District continues to apply regulated and permitted herbicides in the canal systems for the control of aquatic vegetation. The canals are inspected regularly and sprayed to achieve design flow.

Throughout the year, crews continuously inspect drainage culverts for maintenance and replacement. Culverts that have sediment buildup, damage, or severe deterioration can impede the flow of water during storm events. Once a culvert is replaced, bagged rip-rap headwalls are installed to minimize damage and erosion, and sod is placed for additional stabilization. Fully functional culverts allow for maximum discharge during storm events.

The District’s driveway culvert program is available to provide landowners with low-cost high-quality culverts with installation at correct elevations to achieve system wide drainage. Since 2016, the District has installed over 1,400 driveway culverts. Culverts and their maintenance are the landowner’s responsibility. This includes keeping it free of debris and sediment build up. With older culverts, landowners should look for sink holes around the culvert if you have a permanent surface such as concrete, or asphalt, look for cracks, or depressions, these could be signs of culvert failure. If you would like more information, please contact our office.

Roadside swales are part of the secondary drainage system. They collect stormwater from properties and roadways. Swales and canals are both designed to direct water runoff, but they function in different ways. Swales are essentially shallow trenches positioned at a low point in a landscape to catch or divert water and promote infiltration. So, if you can expect to see some water in the roadside swale after a storm event.

Canals (ditches) are deep and narrow channels that convey stormwater runoff. Canals typically have steeper sides than swales and are built to convey large volumes of water quickly away from a site without creating erosion.

Since most landowners are on well systems, storage and percolation is needed for aquifer absorption. When ditches become impacted or blocked, stormwater flow and flood protection can be affected, and in some cases, can back up water onto neighboring properties. To restore flow, elevations are checked, ditches are recontoured, and if needed, sod is added for erosion control. Open ditches along with operable culverts can maximize stormwater runoff.

District canals are inspected regularly for erosion, aquatic weed growth, illegal dumping, and illicit discharge. Canal washouts create negative impacts to the district's drainage system. Small erosion areas can lead to major blockages if not restored design elevations. If left unattended, the erosion can undermine trees making them vulnerable to uprooting during storm events. Once the erosion is reported, crews are dispatched to restore the area. Motorized vehicles are not allowed on South Indian River Water Control District canal levees. Anyone who uses the canal levees for passive recreation is doing so at their own risk.

Each year, District operators are trained to identify and report illicit discharges or illegal dumping within the stormwater system. All inspections and violations are logged as part of our annual report for the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System. When illicit discharges are reported, the District works with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to identify the discharge and safely remove it.

Illegal dumping violations are reported to the Solid Waste Authority Investigative Unit, Palm Beach County Code Enforcement and Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Environmental Crimes Unit. Illegal dumping can have negative impacts on District operations, wildlife, and even alter water quality if entering the drainage system. If you witness anyone committing these violations, contact our office immediately.

Continuous training is an essential part of our safety program. For the 26th consecutive year, the District has received awards for employee and vehicle safety from the Palm Beach County Safety Council.

The District continues to be concerned with the illegal use of motorized (electric or fuel) on canal levees and other restricted areas. Property damage, accidents, even fatalities have occurred when unauthorized machines operate on District's easements. This illegal activity is subject to a Palm Beach County Sheriff's citation and vehicle confiscation. If you witness these activities, please call our office.

The District office is located at 15600 Jupiter Farms Rd and is open Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. If you have any questions or concerns, please stop by. You can also contact us at 561-747-0550, sirwcd@sirwcd.org, or you can visit our website at <https://www.sirwcd.org>.