



Lake Worth Drainage District Canal Rehabilitation Program: Frequently Asked Questions

Necessity

Q: *Why is this project being done?*

A1: Over the years, certain portions of canal rights-of-way have become encumbered by encroachments that can obstruct the District's ability to provide flood control. The Canal Rehabilitation Program has been developed to identify these canal areas and systematically remove these encroachments.

A2: This work is necessary to facilitate effective flood control for public safety and provide unobstructed access for emergency flood control response and routine canal maintenance.

A3: Vegetative and structural encroachments located on the District's canal rights-of-way can create obstructions to water flow during heavy rainfall events and/or hinder the District's ability to properly maintain the canal, both of which can cause serious flooding issues for surrounding neighborhoods.

Q: *What will be removed?*

A: The first phase of these rehabilitation efforts is to remove encroaching vegetation. All non-native vegetation within the canal right-of-way will be removed. Any native vegetation that is determined to interfere with District maintenance operations may also be removed. Select native vegetation might remain.

Q: *What is non-native vegetation?*

A: Examples of non-native vegetation include Ficus trees and bushes, Australian Pine trees, Brazilian Pepper, Black Olive trees and Acacia trees and bushes, among others.

Q: *What is native vegetation?*

A: Native vegetation such as Slash Pine trees and Live Oak trees might remain.

Q: *There has never been a problem in the past. Why is it a problem now?*

A: Just because the trees/encroachments have not been a problem in the past does not guarantee that they will not fall into the canal and become a problem in the future. The District requires a clear unencumbered right-of-way for emergency response. Another ancillary benefit to a right-of-way clear of vegetative and structural encroachments is faster restoration of residential power following a storm event (clear right-of-way facilitates utilities restoration efforts).

Q: In the past, I have seen LWDD perform maintenance from the opposite bank. Why does LWDD need to clear my bank? Can't LWDD continue to maintain my bank from the opposite bank?

A: The District requires clear unencumbered access from both banks in the event that access is limited on one bank from storm-related debris. Response time is critical when trying to prevent flooding. Also, encumbrances from either side can fall into the canal and obstruct flow.

Scheduling

Q: When will the project start/end?

A: Based on the District's current schedule, referenced in the project notification letter, the project's estimated start/end dates are contingent on resource availability, weather and/or other priorities. The District provides an estimated "window" based on many variables.

Q: How long do I have to move/remove my encroachments?

A: You should move/remove any encroachments within the District's right-of-way prior to the project start date. Any encroachments remaining in the right-of-way at the start of the project may be removed and disposed by the District.

Encroachments

Q: What will happen to the trees/fence/shed/patio/etc.?

A1: Any plantings or vegetation, structures, fences or private property located and identified within the right-of-way are encroachments and should be removed by the property owner prior to the commencement of the project.

A2: Any encroachments remaining in the right-of-way at the commencement of the project may be removed and disposed of by the District.

Q: Do I have to remove the encroachment if I have an existing permit/encroachment agreement?

A: Please provide any prior written LWDD approvals, agreements, permits, or authorizations for any existing encroachments within the canal right-of-way to the District for review. As a condition of most permit/encroachment agreements the encroachments must be removed by the property owners upon request from the District. Property owners may apply for a new permit according to the current District policies.

Aesthetics

Q: What can be done to improve my view after the project is completed?

A: The primary purpose of drainage canals is providing flood control, not aesthetics. To improve aesthetics, you can plant vegetation and/or construct fencing on your property, outside of the District's right-of-way.

Q: Will the Canal Rehabilitation Project decrease my property or its value?

A: Your title research/property survey should have identified any existing right-of-way and/or easements that your property was subject to, including any restrictions. To improve aesthetics, you can plant vegetation and/or construct fencing on your property, outside of the District's right-of-way.

Project Scope

Q: *What will be removed?*

A: Rehabilitation efforts may include removal of vegetative encroachments, removal of structural and non-structural encroachments, dredging of the canal channel, and reshaping or reconstruction of the canal bank(s).

Q: *Will the canal bank be regraded?*

A: There may be some regrading involved. Typically, projects are accomplished in three (3) major phases: 1) Vegetation Removal, 2) Encroachment Removal, and 3) Earthwork (dredge, fill, grading). Decisions regarding earthwork and/or grading will be made following the Vegetation Removal phase.

Q: *Will the tree stumps be removed?*

A: Yes, when possible, the stumps are typically ground down to the ground level.

Q: *Will the canal bank be sodded?*

A: No, the canal banks are not typically sodded. The mulch is left in-place to promote natural recruitment of native vegetation.

Q: *Will the canal bank be replanted?*

A: After removal of encroachments the canal right-of-way will not be replanted. The District's canal rights-of-way are public property and exists solely for canal operation and maintenance.

Q: *You appear to be finished with this project; is everything remaining acceptable now?*

A: Following the initial Canal Rehabilitation phase to remove encroaching vegetation, additional phases of canal rehabilitation work may be necessary to remove remaining structural non-vegetative encroachments. These other encroachments might include fences, walls, sheds, pool decks, irrigation lines and sprinkler heads, docks, etc. Although the District did not remove an encroachment with the initial project phase it does not mean the encroachment is permitted to remain. It is recommended that you take this opportunity to remove or relocated remaining encroachments. Remaining encroachments are recorded and will be scheduled for future removal.

Property Interests

Q: *What is the purpose of the canal right-of-way?*

A: The canal right-of-way is public property and exists solely for canal operation and maintenance. Adjacent property owners should not consider this right-of-way as part of their back or side yard.

Q: How do I know where the property/easement lines are?

A1: The canal right-of-way lines within the limits of the project have been, or are scheduled to be, field-staked by the District's Florida Licensed Surveyors. Any plantings or vegetation, structures, fences or personal property located and identified within the right-of-way are encroachments and should be removed by the property owner prior to the commencement of this project. Please be advised that any encroachments remaining in the right-of-way at the commencement of the project may be removed and disposed of by the District.

A2: The District typically stakes the right-of-way lines one to two (1 to 2) months prior to the start of the Canal Rehabilitation project.

Q: Why are you removing vegetation on my property?

A: The District is not removing vegetation on your property. The District is removing nuisance and exotic vegetation from the District's right-of-way adjacent to your property. If there is nuisance and exotic vegetation on your property adjacent to the District right-of-way that could become a storm hazard to the canal and you would like to have it removed, the District will consider removal on a case-by-case basis contingent on the property owner signing a Right-of-Entry/Hold Harmless Agreement which authorizes the District to perform work on privately-owned lands.

Q: Why is the canal right-of-way so wide?

A: It may appear that the District right-of-way is wider than it needs to be. This may be true if all the District did in this area was to mow the ground vegetation from the canal berms and the channel side slopes. However, the District also needs to access this area with much larger equipment for canal dredging, erosion repairs, and clean-up of debris before and after storm events.

Security

Q: I relied on the fence/hedge/vegetation/etc. for security/for my dogs/for my kids/etc. What am I supposed to do now?

A1: If you have constructed or installed any fencing, plantings or vegetation, or any other items within the canal right-of-way of which you are relying on for security purposes, please be advised these are considered encroachments and they may be removed with this rehabilitation project.

A2: You can either build a new fence/hedge/structure/barrier or relocate your existing fence/hedge/structure/barrier outside of the District's canal right-of-way to secure your property.