

LOXAHATCHEE GROVES WATER CONTROL DISTRICT
DISTRICT ENGINEER'S ANNUAL REPORT
JUNE 2008 - MAY 2009

AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Loxahatchee Groves Water Control District (District) is responsible for drainage, flood control and protection, water management and reclamation of lands, and road maintenance and improvements within its boundaries. The District's boundaries extend from 162nd Drive North to Folsom Road and from Southern Boulevard (SR 80) to one-half mile north of North Road. Pursuant to Florida Statutes Chapter 298, its Water Control Plan and enabling legislation, Chapters 99-425 and 2004-410, Laws of Florida, the District owns, constructs, operates and maintains the works of the District, regulates their use by others, contracts for the construction, operation and maintenance of the works of the District by others and controls, condemns or otherwise acquires lands. Works of the District include public rights-of-way for canals and roads within the District's benefitted area, levees, gated water control structures and pumping stations.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS:

The Town of Loxahatchee Groves (Town) and the District remain separate governmental entities. Service delivery to the landowners within their overlapping boundaries is not duplicated. The District continues to provide storm drainage, road maintenance and road improvement services. The Town is responsible for those services formerly provided by Palm Beach County prior to incorporation such as land use planning, zoning, and building regulation, code enforcement, traffic control regulations, and police protection. The District and Town governments shall continue providing good governance to the Loxahatchee Groves community well into the future.

The District has continued to cultivate a network of close relationships with Federal, State, and Local government agencies, including Palm Beach County Engineering, Palm Beach County Water Utilities Department, the United States Department of Agriculture, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the Town of Loxahatchee Groves. Several millions of dollars in revenue have been received from these agencies over the last several years which has been used to offset significant increases in the District's maintenance assessment. Special projects that otherwise would have been impossible to achieve have been funded with this revenue. However, recent setbacks to national and state economies have resulted in fewer opportunities for outside revenue enhancement.

The District's relationship with the Town has strengthened in recent months providing a more reliable funding source for the District's service delivery needs. The formation of an Intergovernmental Coordination (IGC) Committee comprised of staff and elected officials from the Town and District has provided an effective public forum for resolving common difficulties, identifying shared service responsibilities and cooperative project funding opportunities. This

Committee was established January 2009 and has continued to meet on a monthly basis to the present day.

As an example of this improved relationship, the Town Council recently indicated it will approve the use of \$240,000.00 of shared gas tax revenues for the District's road maintenance and improvement needs. Special districts are ineligible to receive shared revenue. These funds are only available to County and municipal governments. Upon agreement, the District will have the ability to reallocate budgeted revenues designated for roadway services toward accomplishing other essential projects. These projects, planned for several years, have been postponed due to budget constraints. The cooperative relationship between the District and Town will provide direct financial benefit to the residents and landowners of the Loxahatchee Groves community.

CANAL MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENTS:

The District established a rotational Canal Maintenance and Drainage Improvement Plan in 1998 that has allocated funding for the creation and restoration of the District's canal system. The plan provides for the cleaning and maintenance of all District canals every nine years. This year, the District, by interlocal agreement with Palm Beach County, completed the cleaning and reshaping of North Road Canal. Work included the removal of all encroaching vegetation, dredging and removal of several feet of silt from the North Road Canal right-of-way between "A" Road Canal and "E" Road Canal. The improved drainage capacity of North Road Canal has translated into greater flood protection and higher property values for the affected landowners.

The North Road Canal improvements were funded and administered by the Palm Beach County Water Utilities Department in conjunction with their North Region Utility Improvement Project. In addition to the canal section improvements noted above, the work also involved the replacement of nine (9) failing bridges, thirty (30) drainage culverts, unpaved roadway improvements, and an equestrian trail. Total "value-added" services benefiting the District's landowners exceeded \$1.5 million. To understand and appreciate the significance of this influx of revenue and "in-kind" services, the equivalent cash value exceeds the District's road and canal maintenance budget for next fiscal year.

Unlike the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons, the South Florida region has experienced relatively little tropical storm activity for the last three years. The region has also experienced significant drought conditions where rainfall has been less than average--a condition that was mitigated last year with above average rainfall. Most of it occurring from a wet tropical storm (Fay) in August 2008.

The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) issued emergency orders on May 18, 2009 affecting all diversion and impoundment permittees, including the District, requiring a 100% reduction in water allocated from the C-51 Canal. Shortly thereafter, Palm Beach County recorded the wettest month for May since recordkeeping began several decades ago. South Florida Water Management District rescinded the emergency order on June 5, 2009.

One issue of mutual interest and significance to the Town and District is the provision of a reliable water source for fire protection purposes. Water restrictions imposed by South Florida Water Management District threaten the District's ability to maintain adequate water levels in its canal system for the Town's fire department (Palm Beach County Fire-Rescue) to use for fighting residential and wildland fires. The IGC Committee regularly discusses this issue and is currently investigating alternatives for supplying fire protection water. Viable alternatives must simultaneously be economically and logistically sustainable.

ROAD MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENTS:

As a specific-purpose government agency the District's authority to provide public services is that which is expressly granted by Florida Law. Three years ago, the District received four petitions from landowner groups requesting their roads be improved with Open Grade Emulsification (OGEM)—an inexpensive road surface stabilization process similar to standard pavement. In accordance with Florida Law, the District's Board of Supervisors cannot authorize the improvement of a District road without a referendum of the landowners that would be affected by and agree to pay for such improvement. A majority of votes cast on a per-acre basis must indicate that the affected landowners are in favor of paying for the improved OGEM road surface before the District Board can proceed with the requested project. District road petitions were submitted requesting OGEM stabilization on "A" Road, "C" Road, and "D" Road, each segment extending from Okeechobee Boulevard to North Road, and "B" Road extending from Collecting Canal Road to Okeechobee Boulevard.

The Board of Supervisors scheduled four separate referendum elections for the respective, affected landowners to decide whether they were in favor of paying for the improved OGEM road surface. The results of the elections are as follows:

<u>Election Date</u>	<u>Road Segment</u>	<u>Yes (acres)</u>	<u>No (acres)</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
02/24/09	A Road (north)	337	75	Passed
03/12/09	B Road (south)	154	175	Failed
03/25/09	C Road (north)	419	103	Passed
04/22/09	D Road (north)	346	118	Passed

Three of the four referendums passed. The District is currently coordinating project financing and establishing the assessment collection process for paying off the debt. It is anticipated this work will commence sometime during 2010 and be completed early 2011.

The District completed all road improvements on North Road from "A" Road to "E" Road (2.0 miles) this past year. An excess of 9,000 tons of new base rock was placed over a two-year period at a cost of \$150,000.00. The funding for these improvements and other transportation-related expenditures was provided by the above-mentioned ILA with Palm Beach County Water Utilities Department.

General maintenance to all District roads, including the placement of specified base material occurred throughout the year. Total base rock purchased by the District and placed on District rights-of-way this year (excluding the North Road Project) was 1,700 tons. Approximately 300 tons of this amount was used in a cooperative project with the Town of Loxahatchee Groves for emergency assistance to the residents of 24th Court North from 24th Circle North. Tropical Storm Fay's rains created extensive flooding, land-locking the residents with no way out of their neighborhood. District Staff also provided weekly road maintenance service on all District roads equivalent to over 3,000 miles of road surface being graded and watered last year.

Throughout the past year, all District roads were cleared of encroaching vegetation. District Staff continues to provide this work internally; thus, saving the District several thousands of dollars annually by not contracting with an outside entity.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS:

The District pumped 1.258 billion gallons of water from the C-51 Canal to replenish District canal levels this year. The District's water use permit from the South Florida Water Management District allows an annual maximum allocation of 1.332 billion gallons of water. Conversely, the District received and managed over 52.8 inches of rainfall during the year. The total annual rainfall amount equates to 11.6 billion gallons of water. This volume represents a decrease in recorded rainfall over the previous year of 31%.

The District's revised and updated Public Facilities Report for 2009 was prepared and submitted to Palm Beach County as required, per Section 189.415, Florida Statutes.

This year there were a total of ten (10) drainage connection permits, one (1) bridge culvert permit (time extension), and five (5) right-of-way utility permits issued by the District. There were also two (2) courtesy grading petitions received and filed by the Board of Supervisors.

For the fifth year in a row, the District received two awards of excellence for "Vehicle Safety" and "Worker Safety" from the Palm Beach County Safety Council. The dedication and teamwork of the District's employees and their commitment to adhering to the District's safety policies and procedures is directly attributable to having incurred zero accidents and zero injuries for the last five years.

Respectfully submitted,
LOXAHATCHEE GROVES WATER CONTROL DISTRICT



Clete J. Saunier, P.E.
District Engineer

CJS/lrb