Beautiful, Naturally

Preserving Polk County wetlands for stormwater

Floodplains serve a beneficial function. While they can be hazardous locations where growth and development occurs in an urbanized area, open and natural spaces allow floodwaters to spread out over large areas.

It is important that we preserve such natural areas and wetlands. Wetland plants filter stormwater runoff, making it cleaner for those downstream. Native trees and wetland plants also have deep root systems that absorb and hold stormwater better than typical lawns. Preserving these plants reduces flooding and drainage problems.

However, one of the most important roles of Polk County Government is to keep our residents and visitors safe. Knowing what to do if storms are eminent and flooding occurs is vital to everyone's well-being.

Please learn about flood hazards and take actions to protect yourself and your property in the event of flooding in Polk County.

Important Numbers

Citizen's Info Line
863.401-2234
866.661.0228

BoCC Switchboard
863.534.6000

Building Division
863.534.6080

Emergency Management
863.298.7000

Mosquito Control
863.534.7377

Roads & Drainage
863.535.2200

Utilities (Water)
863.298.4100

Waste & Recycling
863.284.4319

Police/Fire/Medical
9-1-1

Sheriff's Office
863.298.6200

Animal Control
863.499.2600

Fed. Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
800.621.FEMA

American Red Cross
863.294.5941

The Salvation Army
West Polk
863.682.8179
East Polk
863.291.5107

United Way
2-1-1
883.648.1515
80.881.UWAY

POLK COUNTY

Land Development Division
Floodplain Management
330 W. Church Street
Bartow, FL 33830

863.534.6767
www.polk-county.net/floodmanagement

Things you should know about flooding in Polk County

POLK COUNTY
FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT

46% of Polk is a Special Flood Hazard Area

Polk County experiences frequent and unpredictable tropical systems most commonly from June 1 through November 30. The greatest risk is during August and September. These systems can drop tremendous amounts of rain in very short periods of time. Most casualties caused by hurricanes are the result of flooding.

Know where to go in case of heavy rains and localized flooding. In most cases, there is time to evacuate safely before flooding becomes a serious concern. Waiting too long could result in a serious situation for you or your family.

Check with Polk County Floodplain Management to find out your flood zone, the base flood elevation for your neighborhood or to see if there is an elevation certificate for your structure. Use the County Map Viewer at **www.polk-county.net** to see how this affects you and your property.

If flooding is expected, turn off the gas and electricity to your house. Electrical currents from downed power lines and home circuits can travel through water and create a safety hazard. **Do not walk or drive through flowing water or flooded areas.** Drowning is the number one cause of flood deaths, followed by electrocution.

Polk County Emergency Management maintains the local flood warning system used to call people in a specific area and inform them of a threat. During emergencies, tune in to PGTV (Bright House 644, Verizon 20, Comcast 5), local television stations and primary emergency broadcast system radio stations WONN 1230 AM or WPCV 97.5 FM.

Homeowner's insurance does not protect you from flood damage, so plan ahead. Contact your insurance agent to purchase appropriate coverage. Property owners with federally-backed loans for structures located in an SFHA are required to carry flood insurance. Flood insurance can cover the structure alone or both the structure and its contents. Even if owners do not have structural coverage, renters can still buy insurance for contents.

Maintain the drain. Do not sweep or blow leaves, pine needles, grass clippings or soil into the street or stormwater system. This clogs pipes and prevents water from draining. If your property is adjacent to a drainage ditch, keep the banks clear of brush and debris. Dumping debris, garbage or other waste in ditches is prohibited. To report someone dumping trash in waterways, stormwater systems and drainage ditches, or to request drainage maintenance, contact the Roads and Drainage Division at (863) 535-2200.

Flood proof or retrofit buildings to reduce or eliminate flood damage. Consider elevation, flood barriers, dry flood proofing and wet flood proofing. Electrical panel boxes, fuel tanks, heat pumps, washers, dryers and water heaters should be elevated or relocated to areas less likely to flood. Sandbags, plywood, lumber and plastic sheeting can be used to create flood barriers and minimize damage.

County personnel can make site visits to assist property owners with flooding, drainage and sewer questions and to address any site-specific flooding concerns. This service is free.

Required building permits ensure that all construction, additions, conversions and/or developments comply with minimum standards. Additional standards apply when building in Special Flood Hazard Areas. These standards are intended to reduce or eliminate flood damage.

To obtain a building permit contact the Polk County Building Division at (863) 534-6080. Most construction requires permits. If you see someone working without a permit, or for additional questions or concerns about permits, please call the Building Division.

Do you live in a flood zone? You can contact Floodplain Management to get a copy of floodmaps, a copy of your elevation certificate if one exists or to schedule a FREE site visit to discuss flooding issues and receive suggestions on how best to flood-proof your property.