



## LWDD CREWS CONTINUE CLEARING CANAL STORM DEBRIS

### *Hurricane Irma highlights importance of vegetation removal projects*

**Delray Beach, Florida, September 22, 2017** - Following Hurricane Irma, the Lake Worth Drainage District identified more than 350 sites along its 500-mile canal network which require debris removal. Nearly half of the sites identified included debris in the canal channels which could potentially threaten drainage by restricting water flow or creating blockages at water control structures.

District field crews were immediately mobilized after the storm passed to begin the clean-up process, focusing first on the most problematic areas that might affect drainage. To date, approximately half of these priority projects have been completed. Once canal channels are cleared of debris, District crews will begin removing downed trees and vegetation located on canal rights-of-way. All hurricane debris removal projects are expected to be complete within six weeks.

The impacts of Hurricane Irma highlight the importance of keeping canal rights-of-way free of trees, vegetation and other encumbrances. Last year, the Lake Worth Drainage District doubled its efforts to remove trees and encumbrances from canal rights-of-way to ensure effective drainage for its 750,000 customers in Palm Beach County. Prior to Hurricane Irma, crews completed the clearing of more than 25 miles of rights-of-way, removing exotic vegetation and structural encroachments such as fences and sheds.

"As a result of our accelerated efforts, we are in a much better position today than we would have been if this storm happened five years ago. It only takes one tree to obstruct water flow and create potential drainage issues for thousands of residents," said Robert Brown, LWDD Executive Director.

Maintaining canal rights-of-way free of vegetation and encumbrances is a continual challenge for many water control districts. Florida's tropical climate is ideal for the proliferation of exotic vegetation which must be continually treated or removed. Also, many residents that live adjacent to drainage canals identify the public rights-of-way as part of their backyards and often plant trees or construct fences that could ultimately end up in the canal channel during a storm event.

Following hurricane recovery efforts, the District will continue its program to clear an additional 100+ miles of encumbered canal rights-of-way with expected completion by 2021.

For photos and videos of Hurricane Irma's impacts and recovery efforts, visit [www.lwdd.net/managing-water/hurricane-irma](http://www.lwdd.net/managing-water/hurricane-irma)