

TRASH IN OUR CANALS

What do shopping carts, garbage, footballs, building materials, used oil, televisions, plastic cups, lawn chairs, furniture and even an automobile all have in common?

They were all found in our neighborhood canals and waterways. The accumulation of trash and unwanted materials continues, despite the daily efforts of Sunshine Water Control District's work crews, who work to keep the 22 miles of waterways clean. In most cases, the trash winds up in canals because it wasn't disposed of properly, as shown in the pictures. Other materials and unwanted junk are illegally disposed of and just thrown into the water, sinking to the bottom. Even grass clippings and tree or shrub trimmings, thrown in canals, clog and restrict the flow of water. Although these dumpers and trashers are only a small percentage of all residents, this damage impacts us all. The majority of residents take pride in our waterways and want to maintain the beauty of our canals.

The careless dumping and littering, however, is a cause for concern because our waterways provide home to many species of wildlife, in addition to their main purpose to control flooding during storm events. It is imperative to our health and safety that canals are clean and flow freely, so water can be discharged from our neighborhoods when needed.

Birds and aquatic wildlife are not the only things that can be harmed by canal litter. People may be affected by it as well. Polluted canal water can seep into our aquifers, from which our drinking water is drawn. Stagnant, unhealthy waters also emit odors, while killing off living organisms. While this is a concern for our health, immediate and more widespread devastation can come as a result of flooding.

We all know what damage a flood can cause, as seen in other states. Our canal systems, however, were designed to remove excess water at a fast rate, even with Florida's low land elevations. To accomplish removing potential floodwaters, pump stations must be running at capacity and water must flow from our canals. If canals or culverts or pump stations are blocked or clogged, flooding will occur.

What can residents do to keep our canals clean?

Here are some actions that keep our waterways clear, clean and healthy:

- Dispose of trash, pollutants and garbage properly.
- Take care of styrofoam containers that can wind up in canals.
- Report illegal canal dumping or vandalism to police if you observe it.
- Place used fishing line in monofilament recycling containers
- Reduce, reuse, and recycle. Broward County has many free sites to dispose of virtually any type of trash, furniture or equipment.
- Participate in local canal cleanups.
- Teach our younger generation about our valuable water resources and what they can do to protect and preserve it.

It is very important that we keep Sunshine Water Control District's canals and waterways clean and environmentally safe. If we all contribute, beautiful waterways will enhance our community as well as protect us from flooding during storms.