

Understanding Lakes as part of the Storm Water Management System

Many people have inquired as to whether or not it is safe to swim in the lakes. The bigger question is to understand why the lakes are there and the way in which they serve all of the residents within the Northern Palm Beach County Improvement District.

The lakes are part of a large storm water management system that accepts run-off from all of the property owners within Northern Palm Beach County Improvement District's Units of Development. Many of these systems utilize powerful pumps to remove excess storm water and prevent flooding. Although the lakes are beautiful and may appear pristine, a common sense approach when considering a swim in one is warranted. Storm water is NOT processed, clean water, like the water from your tap. It does not go through a water treatment plant for filtering and cleansing. Storm water is accumulated rain water that is directed into the lake system and washes along anything on the roads and landscaped areas. The lakes are not treated like a swimming pool with chemicals to kill bacteria. When the lakes are treated, it is for the purpose of controlling aquatic weeds and algae.

Road runoff is a contributing factor in storm water inputs into the lake system. Oil and fuel from vehicles eventually finds its way to a water source. In addition, homeowners who dump their lawn clippings, paints, oil and other products down storm drains assume that it goes into a water pipe. It goes into the storm water system which, in this case, is your lake system. If you see your neighbor doing this, you should discourage them from it in the future.

You may also report illegal dumping to the NPDES (National Pollution Discharge Elimination System) coordinator at Northern Palm Beach County Improvement District.

The lake system is not meant to be a swimming pool. It is designed to perform a specific function and purpose. It is part of a water management flow system that accepts storm and rain water run-off and acts as a conduit for floodwaters to drain off the site. As part of this process, the natural evolution which involves pollution from both natural and man-made materials, seep into the lake system water. It is for these reasons that the Northern discourages swimming in the lakes.

Another important aspect of some of the lakes in Abacoa and one of the largest maintenance projects currently in progress within Abacoa is the repair to the liner for Lake No. 20. There are currently five lakes located in the southwest quadrant of Abacoa that were constructed in the late 1990's with impervious liners. The purpose of the liners is to retain reclaimed water which is pumped into the lakes from the Loxahatchee River Environmental Control District. The reclaimed water is then pumped out of the lakes into the Abacoa master irrigation system. Without the liners in place, much of the water would be lost through exfiltration into the ground water. There are several areas where the integrity of the liner has deteriorated over time due to exposure and erosion and in need of repair in order to maintain the integrity of the liner. This will be an ongoing project over the next several years and funding will be allocated accordingly. This year's project consists of a budget of \$190,000.

The first phase of this project will focus on the highest priority area which is located within Lake 20 adjacent to "The Island" Community from 206 Barbados Dr. south and east to 250 Barbados Dr. The work will commence in late April or early May and will consist of earthwork to re-shape the lake bank, installation of geo-fabric for future stabilization and liner repair. The project is anticipated to take approximately eight weeks to complete.

If you have any questions, or need any further information, please contact us at (561) 624-7830 or via our website www.npbcid.org, or via email at: office@npbcid.org.

NPDES Tip: Please do not dump any excess oils, paints or solvents into lakes, canals, or storm drains! They go directly into the ground water supply