

DRAINAGE CANALS AND DITCHES

Drainage canals may be important components of upland development. Their potential to shunt polluted stormwater runoff and fresh water directly into tidal waters requires intermediate connection to retention ponds or wetlands. This allows natural filtration and assimilation of pollutants and dampening for freshwater surges prior to discharge into tidal waters. Other guidelines for housing developments and/or transportation projects may apply. Guidelines for drainage canals and ditches include:

- a. Canals that drain wetlands, special aquatic sites, or cause other adverse impacts are not recommended.
- b. Constructing upland retention ponds and other water management features such as sheet-flow diffusers is encouraged. A retention pond or other pollution elimination/assimilation structure may be required in uplands to intercept any effluent-containing materials that are toxic to marsh vegetation or other aquatic life.
- c. Excavated materials resulting from canal and retention pond construction should be placed and contained on uplands or, when possible, used beneficially such as in an approved wetlands restoration or beach restoration project.
- d. Proposed plans should be prepared in accordance with comprehensive flood plain management plan(s) and other plans such as wastewater management, drainage, etc. Applicants are encouraged to consult with the Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and appropriate State agencies to ensure that Federal and State water quality standards are met.
- e. Runoff and erosion from agricultural lands should be minimized through the use of best management practices.
- f. Allowing natural vegetation to line drainage canals and ditches is encouraged. Vegetation is preferred to concrete lined ditches because it slows flood waters, binds sediments, prevents erosion and provides fish and wildlife habitats.
- g. The clearing of brush, trees and riparian vegetation for equipment access and/or project design should be avoided.