

# PIMA COUNTY REGIONAL FLOOD CONTROL DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE ADM-217

EFFECTIVE DATE: 11/15/07

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## PROCEDURE TITLE: Guidelines for Hydrologists

### PURPOSE:

The purpose of this procedure is to provide information for hydrologists in the Floodplain Management Division working on or with Floodplain Use Permits (FPUPs). It provides guidance and resources for hydrologists and also addresses frequently asked questions. The information contained in this procedure is generally of a nature that does not lend itself to individual procedures and therefore covers a wide range of topics. As such, this procedure is a repository for institutional knowledge.

### PROCEDURE:

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### Resources

The following resources are available for hydrologists when assisting customers or preparing permits.

1. Hydrologic Models
  - a. PC Hydro
  - b. Other Hydraulic Models (HEC-RAS, HEC-HMS, etc)
  - c. Flowmaster
  - d. Culvertmaster
  - e. Mannings Spreadsheet
  - f. Scour Spreadsheet
2. Improvement and permit history investigations
  - a. District permit database

- b. Old FPUP logs may contain information on previous FPUPs processed before the current FPUP database was created.
  - c. Stereo Photos (Available in hard copy and on MapGuide. 1941 aerial photos available through the RFCF intranet web site)
  - d. Aerial photography in Special Studies reports.
  - e. Permits Plus (Permit history on a property, compliance issues)
  - f. Pima County Assessors website (effective construction year, etc.)
3. MapGuide resources
- a. Access the FPUP/DC/VIO database by double-clicking on the FPUP/DC/VIO boxes in MapGuide
  - b. Access Elevation Certificates by double-clicking the Elevation Certificate boxes in MapGuide
  - c. View Development Plan, Improvement Plans, Subdivision Plats
  - d. Regulatory Discharge Points
  - e. Oblique View, Historic Aerials
  - f. Polygon drawing and area calculator for determine watershed areas
  - g. Pictometry photographs and measuring tools
4. Topography
- a. Stereo Photos
  - b. Paper Topography
  - c. Special Studies and engineering analyses
  - d. Historic Firms and Workmaps
  - e. USGS quadrangles (in flat map file at front counter)
5. Delineating Watersheds
- a. MapGuide (see 3. above)
  - b. USGS quadrangles (in flat map file at front counter)
  - c. Stereo photographs
  - d. A digitizer is available for calculating watershed areas on paper maps or stereo photos
6. Miscellaneous resources
- a. Legal descriptions for parcels may be used to locate property when MapGuide is inaccurate.
  - b. The District has a large format copier and scanner for roll plans or other large maps

## **Counter Hydrologists:**

### **A. Permit intake for counter hydrologists:**

1. Remember when starting a new FPUP to make sure you use the correct log form and use the next consecutive number. Always go to the oldest log (001-100) and find the first unassigned FPUP # for a new permit. Only if all of those numbers are used should you go on to the next folder (101-200), then the next, etc. Keep in mind that some FPUP numbers are blocked out and assigned to the other District office location and should not be used.
2. If permit application is for a structure, make sure the application indicates how the structure is proposed to be protected from flood hazards.
3. Only structures usable solely for vehicle parking and limited storage may be flood vented and flood proofed (see Technical Policies TECH 021 and TECH 022).
4. Flood vented structures still require erosion protection.
5. If the structure to be permitted is in the floodplain and is not going to be elevated to the Regulatory Flood Elevation (RFE), the site plan must indicate the floodproof materials that are to be used for that portion of the structure below the RFE.
6. Make sure that the site plan is drawn to scale, shows all existing and proposed improvements.
7. Look for previous District action (FPUPs/DCs/VIOs) on the property. The status of each FPUP/DC/VIO should be available by accessing the database for that item by double-clicking the box for it in MapGuide.

8. Check for previous covenants recorded for the property. If they haven't been done, obtain the latest recorded deed for the property and inform the applicant that covenants will need to be signed by the property owner(s) before the FPUP can be issued. While covenants may be prepared and given to the applicant or signed by the property owner(s) at the time of intake, only do so if it is clear that you know which covenants apply. Sometimes it is determined that specific covenants are needed only after the area hydrologist has reviewed the permit.
9. Before having the customer leave, review the entire FPUP form for completeness, as this can save a great deal of time and effort later. Especially review the method of elevation portion of the FPUP.
10. As a general rule, each activity will require a separate FPUP. For example: A house and detached garage on the same property require separate FPUPs. At intake, put each FPUP in a separate folder so that they can be treated separately, if necessary, and to avoid documents from one getting crossed over into the other. The two folders will get combined once both are issued. Multiple activities that may be dealt with in a single FPUP are things such as an SFR and wall, an SFR and a shade structure, a pool and wall, etc. In all cases, any activity requiring an Elevation Certificate must have a separate FPUP number.
11. If there are two residences on a single property (i.e. Manufactured Home Space 1 and Manufactured Home Space 2), each activity will require a separate FPUP, and separate folder. In this case, however, the files will NOT get combined at issuance, as they are considered to be separate addresses.
12. If you notice an error in MapGuide or in the database (a data point in the wrong location, missing data, erroneous data), please let the Principal Hydrologist know so that the problem can get fixed.
13. Place an out card as a place holder anytime you remove a folder or report from where you found it, including the Special Study reports at the front counter. This will allow others who may need to look at the file or report to locate it.
14. Write "roll plans" on the outside front of the FPUP folder if there are roll plans associated with the permit.
15. Write the FPUP number on the outside of the rolled up roll plans (if present) and highlight the FPUP number to make it easier to locate plans without having to unroll them.
16. Write the following information on the tab of the FPUP folder: Applicant name/Owner name (upper left), property address (lower left), FPUP number (upper right), Hydrologist area (lower right), date received (lower right).
17. Information requests: A customer may not view a file or get copies out of a file unless it has been reviewed by District staff for content and any necessary documents have been removed or redacted. If an individual wants to view a file, that person must complete the appropriate information request form, and leave contact information so that we can let the person know when the file is ready for review. The person may then either get a copy of the whole file or review the file and select what documents within the file he/she wants copies of, subject to fees for the copies.
18. When taking in permits for site built structures, it is important to make sure we get a copy of the foundation plan. With more and more homes being built with sunken showers, baths, etc, it is important for us to review the foundation plans so that we can make sure we get the lowest finished floor elevated properly. This type of information is often not found on site plans and in general architects don't seem to consider those sunken areas to be the FFE.
19. The intake hydrologist must initial the "Received" box in the lower right-hand corner of the FPUP in case questions arise regarding the FPUP.

## **B. Elevation Certificate intake:**

1. Review Elevation Certificate for completeness and compliance (refer to the Technical Procedure TECH 113)
2. Place an electronic date stamp on the Elevation Certificate.
3. If correct, place your initials and the date in the upper right-hand corner
4. Give Elevation Certificate to Senior or Principal Hydrologist for final review and hold release.
5. If incorrect, refer to the Technical Procedure TECH 113.

### **C. Front counter coverage:**

1. If you are scheduled for front counter duty and will be unable to perform that duty for all or part of the day due to a scheduling conflict, and the conflict arose after the counter schedule was published, it is your responsibility to find someone to cover your position during your absence.
2. If a schedule change occurs, notify all counter hydrologists, front desk support staff, and your supervisor of the schedule change via e-mail.
3. It is the responsibility of the person who is first up to ensure that there is adequate counter coverage for lunch. There should always be at least two people available during lunch coverage.
4. It is the responsibility of the first up to perform the following tasks:
  - a. **First thing in the morning:**
    - i. Start the front counter machines and start up ArcView and Mapguide
    - ii. Turn the copy machines and printers on.
  - b. **Throughout the day:**
    - i. Make sure you are available to assist customers. If you are asked to attend a meeting, make sure that the hydrologists below you in the schedule are aware of your absence or find someone to replace you on the schedule for that period of time.
  - c. **At the end of the day:**
    - i. Close all programs on the front counter machines and log off. DO NOT SHUT THE COMPUTER DOWN. Just log off.
    - ii. Turn front counter computer monitors off.
    - iii. Turn the copy machines and printers off.
    - iv. Make sure all maps and supplies are put away.
5. If you are covering the counter at the Public Works Building, send an e-mail to the Division Manager and the lead staff at the Grading/HDZ counter at DSD when you go to lunch so they know when not to send customers down to you.

### **D. Permit assistance by counter hydrologists:**

1. If an applicant comes in to pick up plans for revision, make a photocopy of the activity sheet and site plan for the file and give the originals to the applicant. Indicate on the photocopies who the permit/plans were given to, and the date.

### **E. Covenant guidelines:**

1. Explain covenants to the customer who is signing them.
2. Due to issues regarding the image quality of FAXed documents, it is not permissible for covenants to be FAXed at any time, even if they have not been signed yet.
3. Covenants may not be e-mailed, as issues have arisen with covenants printed by individuals have been in a color other than black and/or have had reduced text size and were thus rejected by the Recorder's Office.
4. It is the responsibility of the Counter Hydro who has received the covenants to check whether the covenants being returned are for a permit that is issued or not.
5. If the permit is issued (issued-NF), verify that the covenants are completed correctly and release the covenant hold on the FPUP. Annotate the FPUP and FPUP File Chart that covs have been returned.
6. If the permit is NOT issued, then the counter hydro needs to determine whether the permit is in the ready file awaiting the return of the covenants, or if it is still with the Area Hydro. If it's the last thing we need and the permit is ready to issue, then go ahead and issue the permit. Otherwise, inform the area hydro that covenants have been returned for that FPUP. The Area Hydro should then annotate the

file about the return of covs and give the covs to the administrative staff to send to the Recorder's Office.

7. Covenants shall not be required if a portion of a property is within a platted floodplain AND the proposed improvements are not located within the platted floodplain. The floodplain delineation on the plat is considered disclosure of the flood hazard on the property, and only needs to be supplemented with covenants if the improvements are within the floodplain or if covenants are required for other reasons (erosion hazard, etc.).
8. Covenants should be completed if any floodplain other than platted floodplains are located on the property in question, regardless of whether the proposed improvement is within the floodplain or not.
9. For corporate covenants, the signer needs to provide sufficient documentation to demonstrate that he/she is authorized to sign for the company. Sufficient documents include: a corporate resolution demonstrating the individual's ability to represent the company, or a notarized letter on company letterhead that indicates that the person is allowed to represent the company.
10. Each covenant must include a legal description. If regular and access covenants are needed for example, each one requires its own Exhibit A (legal description)
11. Exhibit A must contain a legal description, and only a legal description (the exception to this is plat change covenants). Exhibit A may NOT be the entire deed.
12. All extraneous information must be removed from Exhibit A, especially including, but not limited to, prior recordation numbers.
13. The legal description in Exhibit A must be legible, and, unless it is a direct copy of the previously recorded legal description, shall be in a font no smaller than a 10 point font.
14. Covenants must be signed by anyone who is named on the deed. If 24 people are named on the deed, all 24 need to sign unless someone has the power of attorney to sign for some or all of the others.
15. If covenants are going to be being signed at the District office, make sure to inform the owner(s) to bring in a photo ID and any other documents that may be necessary to prove they are able to sign the covenants (see item 1. above).

#### **F. Permit issuance by counter hydrologists:**

1. Read through each condition and explain conditions, as necessary, to the applicant/owner.
2. Verify that the site plans have been stamped with all necessary conditions.
3. Make sure that foundation details are provided to the applicant, as appropriate.
4. Complete any necessary routing in Permits Plus.

### **Area Hydrologists:**

#### **A. Reviewing permits for past activities when preparing a permit:**

1. Review database for past FPUPs, SRRs, DCs, or Violations. The "Floodplain Services" layer in MapGuide is not always accurate. The database is the most complete and accurate source for this information.
2. Review Permits Plus for past permits.
3. Searching for partial tax codes can be an effective way of locating permits obtained under a parent parcel. For example, if the current tax code is 123-45-678J, searching for 123-45-678 (dropping the last digit or two) will locate permits for 123-45-6780, 123-45-678A, 123-45-678B, etc., which will all be related to the 123-45-6780 parcel. This method works in both the database and in Permits Plus.
4. If there are improvements on the property, review historical aerial photographs to determine approximately when they were placed on the property. Make sure each improvement is permitted, and print any aerial photographs necessary to demonstrate when improvements were added to the property. Use the FCD scanned aerial photographs, available through the "FCD Aerial Photo Index - Section Grid" layer on MapGuide, if necessary) Make sure each photograph is labeled with the year of the photograph.

5. Highlight the suspected unpermitted improvements and include a highlighted copy to the applicant with a letter requiring that the applicant obtain permits for improvements.
6. Remain aware of any drainage swales within sheet flood areas. Washes that appear non-regulatory may receive flow from adjoining watersheds, thus effectively increasing the amount of flow one might otherwise expect from the watershed based on its apparent size. Structures and fill within defined drainage swales should be avoided.
7. Check upstream from the property for stock ponds (dam failure issues), or other potential diversions or concentrations of flow.
8. Check to make sure covenants have been signed or issued to customer for return
9. Prior to submitting an FPUP to the Principal Hydrologist for review, complete ALL fields in the RFCDD portion of the FPUP form, as appropriate, including the status change fields in the lower right corner. Status changes that should be noted include WAIT when a comment letter is sent, and RCVD when that comment letter has been fully responded to.

## **B. Guidelines for annotating files:**

1. When placing notes for the Principal Hydrologist in a file, make an assessment as to whether or not what you are about to write will be necessary for someone two years from now figure out how the file was worked up. For example, if a supervisor has made a decision that a certain small existing shed is exempt from permitting, that should be noted in the inside front cover instead of on a post-it that will be thrown away. If we have agreed to accept something out of the ordinary, that should be permanently noted. If you have looked at historical aerial photographs and determined that a questionable activity (grading, structure, etc.) was present prior to our regulation of that activity and thus doesn't need a permit, that should be noted permanently in the file so that the next person to look at the file doesn't have to re-create your effort. Conversations with customers should also be permanently noted in the permit, such as having an applicant indicate verbally that a roof we see is for a shade structure, noting that the applicant has indicated he/she will add an FFE to the site plan at the time of issuance, etc.
2. Post-it notes should be used very sparingly in files, as even in the short term, they can get dislocated from their intended location and become more confusing than helpful.
3. Note all correspondence and communications with applicants in the FPUP file, including date and brief description of the discussion.
4. Do not write notes on the file folder itself. If you run out of room on the FPUP File Chart, attach a second piece of paper for additional notes.

## **C. Guidelines for annotating maps within a file:**

1. All maps should have a scale and north arrow.
2. Maps should be at a standard engineering scale (1" =100', 1"=20', 1"=1000', etc.)
3. Highlight the property boundaries
4. At least one map with an aerial photograph and floodplains and riparian habitat layers on should have the proposed improvements drawn on it to scale.
5. Clearly indicate important features on the map (flood zone, riparian habitat type, special study information, etc.)

## **D. Calculating BFEs:**

1. When calculating water surface elevations where detailed mapping exists, follow Technical Procedure TECH-101
2. If possible perform this task on an aerial photograph.
3. Draw the outline of the structure in question on the map being used.

4. Place all calculations on the map being used. Place your initials and the date next to any calculations.
5. Use the most detailed available topography to calculate the depth of flow. These calculations should also be initialed and dated.
6. If you need to convert from one datum to another, you can use the following website:  
[http://www.ngs.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/VERTCON/vert\\_con.prl](http://www.ngs.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/VERTCON/vert_con.prl) If you enter the orthometric height of the location you want the conversion for (third entry blank down), MAKE SURE YOU PUT "FT" AFTER THE ELEVATION, OR IT WILL RETURN A CONVERSION IN METERS. Add a print-out of the vertcon results to the FPUP file.
7. If the depth of flow is 2 feet or greater, take a close look at the potential for DV2 to exceed 18.

**E. Riparian habitat disturbance:**

1. Draw the area(s) of disturbance on a map with aerial photo and riparian habitat boundaries.
2. Place all calculations on this sheet, with your initials and date.
3. Round the calculated disturbance to the nearest 5 or 10 square feet.
4. Review previous FPUPs for prior disturbance to make a determination of total cumulative area of disturbance.
5. Remember to note the underlying classification of areas mapped as Important Riparian Areas
6. The following rule of thumb may prove useful: In order for a 1/3 acre disturbance to be less than the 5% threshold and thus avoid BOS approval, there must be about 6.6 acres or more of habitat on the property, so probably most hydro-mesoriparian and IRA mitigation plans will have to go to the Board for approval. So if a property is less than 6.6 acres in size, and someone is disturbing 1/3 acre or more of habitat hydro-mesoriparian or IRA, BOS approval will be required. If the property is more than 6.6 acres, it will be necessary to figure out how much habitat is on the property vs. how much disturbance is occurring within that habitat.
7. Always include the cumulative disturbance portion of the riparian conditions. This information is helpful for future permitting.
8. For walls and fences, assuming a 5 foot wide zone of disturbance for fences and a 10 foot wide zone of disturbance for walls. For example, if there is 100 linear feet of block wall within riparian habitat, the disturbance for the wall should be 10 X 100, or 1000 square feet.

**F. Septic only and grading only permits:**

1. Septic and grading work often doesn't strictly impact the floodplain, but the District must avoid approving a septic system or grading work in a location where we would be unable to approve the inevitable associated structure. It is important therefore, to think about the future uses associated with the septic system or grading. However, conditioning these permits with conditions for future uses becomes confusing. As such, conditions related to structures or future uses should be limited. In general, conditions that relate ONLY to a structure that is not yet being permitted should be excluded. Conditions that apply to the property as a whole should be included.
  - a. What SHOULD be included:
    - i. BFE/RFE
    - ii. General statement that any future structure and service equipment shall be at or above the RFE
    - iii. conditions related to engineering analysis (All work to be performed in accordance with engineering . . .)
    - iv. erosion hazard setbacks
    - v. Other general statements and warnings (FEMA flood zone, covenants, riparian disturbance, any additional uses require a permit, etc.
    - vi. VERY clear statement about what is being permitted and that future SFR/MH shall require a separate permit
  - b. What should NOT be included:

- i. FFE or bottom of frame conditions (fill pad elevation requirements should be included IF the fill pad is what is being permitted, however)
  - ii. Service equipment conditions
  - iii. Any elevation certificate conditions (P2E, P2S, P2F)
  - iv. As-built conditions, unless specifically related to the activity currently being permitted. Erosion protection for a fill pad permit would need the as-built, a permit for stockpiling dirt in advance of building a fill pad would not need an as-built
- c. This information should be conveyed to the property owner through conversation or written correspondence, not through the permit.

## **G. Guidelines for submitting permits for review:**

1. Remember to complete the RFCD portion of the FPUP form prior to submitting a permit for review.
2. Make sure that all documents are attached to the folder, in the order outlined in the FPUP file chart.
3. Make sure that all maps and documents are properly labeled.

## **H. Voiding Permit Applications:**

1. Administrative or Substantive Comment Letters should indicate that permits will be voided if no response is received within 90 days of the date of the letter.
2. Permits should be reviewed for whether or not they should be voided 6 months after the last activity on the permit. In order to determine whether a permit can be voided, the following must be done:
  - a. Verify that the District has not had any contact with the applicant/owner in response to the comment letter.
  - b. Verify that there are no outstanding existing issues on the property (unpermitted structures, fences, unreturned Elevation Certificates, etc.)
  - c. Check the status of the DSD Activity Permit in Permits Plus to ensure that the Activity Permit has not been issued.
  - d. It is recommended that a field inspection be done before a permit is voided due to inactivity in order to ensure that the improvement was not constructed without a permit.
3. If any of the comments were for outstanding issues (see H.2.a. above):
  - a. Send the applicant and property owner a letter stating that the FPUP is void and that the violations on the property will be brought to the attention of the compliance enforcement officer and all other relevant Pima County departments
  - b. Carbon copy the letter to the District compliance enforcement officer and all other relevant enforcement officers (i.e. Building Codes, Zoning, Grading, etc.), the permit shall be given to the Enforcement Officer for compliance enforcement action.
  - c. Give the file and letter to the administrative staff, who will then update the database, send the letter, update the permit log, place a copy of the voided permit in the permit log and provide the file to the enforcement officer.
4. If there are no outstanding issues and the improvement has not been completed without a permit, send the applicant and owner a letter stating that the FPUP is void.
5. Once a permit has been voided, if the applicant/owner renews activity on the property, the voided permit shall remain void and a new FPUP shall be started for the improvement in question. If the DSD Activity Permit application and site plan are still valid, the applicant does not need to re-apply with DSD, just re-apply with the District.
6. **DOCUMENT the reason why the permit has been voided** both on the FPUP form and on the FPUP File Chart

## **I. Expiring Issued Permits**

1. Permits with post-issuance requirements such as the return of an Elevation Certificate or As-Built Certification obtain an issued-NF (Not Finished) status upon issuance. Once the required information has been returned to the District, the permit status becomes “issued.” Permits that remain in issued-NF status for more than a year should be reviewed to determine whether the permitted improvement was constructed or not, and thus determine whether any violations of the conditions of the permit exist. In order to determine whether a permit can be voided, the following must be done:
  - a. Verify that the District has not had any contact with the applicant/owner pursuant to the requirements of the permit, such as an Elevation Certificate that has been received but is awaiting corrections, etc.
  - b. Verify that the permit is not for an outstanding existing issue on the property (unpermitted structures, fences, etc.)
  - c. Check the status of the DSD Activity Permit in Permits Plus to ensure that there has been no activity (inspections, plan revisions, etc) on the Activity Permit within the past year.
  - d. It is recommended that a field inspection be done before a permit is voided due to inactivity in order to ensure that the improvement was not constructed without a permit.
2. If the improvement wasn’t constructed, send a letter to the applicant/owner stating that the permit has expired and that a new permit is required before any work can be done.
3. Once a permit has been expired, if the applicant/owner renews activity on the property, the expired permit shall remain expired and a new FPUP shall be started for the improvement in question. If the DSD Activity Permit application and site plan are still valid, the applicant does not need to re-apply with DSD, just re-apply with the District.

## **J. Miscellaneous guidelines:**

1. If you notice an error in Mapguide or in the database (data point in the wrong location, missing data, erroneous data), please let the Principal Hydrologist know so that the problem can get fixed.
2. It is important for all changes in status of an FPUP to go through the appropriate administrative staff.
3. Save all documents electronically in the directory created for each FPUP, this includes covenants, Elevation Certificates, special conditions, letters, memos, etc.
4. Place an out card as a place holder anytime you remove a folder or report from where you found it. This will allow others who may need to look at the file or report to locate it.
5. When you leave the office for the day, log off of your desktop computer, but do not shut it down unless specifically instructed to do so. Computer updates (i.e. virus protection updates) occur at night and cannot occur if your machine is off. You are encouraged to turn your monitor(s) off to conserve energy, but not the computer itself.
6. Whenever possible, try to limit special conditions to one page, without sacrificing important information. This can be done by decreasing the font size down to as low as a 10 point font, if necessary.
7. Clearly label documents that should be returned to customers at the time of issuance of a permit.
8. In the “Map Tools & Map Info” dropdown menu in MapGuide, there is a selection titled “Oblique Aerial Photo.” There are two options: “Pictometry Photos” and “Live Search Photos” In general, the Pictometry photos are going to be superior in quality and usefulness, and their use is recommended. The Pictometry photos are also date certain, whereas the Live Search photos are of unknown date. In some cases, the oblique photography is more recent than the photography available directly in MapGuide. The oblique photo tool could be quite useful not only for the more recent photography, but also to assist in assessing properties. The photos are not just photographs that are skewed to give you an oblique view of an aerial taken straight down. These are actual side-view photographs. So it might be possible, for example, to determine whether a roof top belongs to an open-sided structure or a closed sided structure. (NOTE: The exact vintage of the photographs is variable, unknown and apparently unknowable, as they are not provided by our IT folks. Sometimes even different angles on the same area are taken at different times.)

9. Based on a January 2007 phone call to Building Codes, they do not require permits for structures under 200 square feet.
10. Floodplain Management Division staff meetings are generally held every first and third Tuesday of the month.
11. Flood Control District staff meetings are generally held on the second Friday of the month.
12. On all site plans for structures being permitted in the floodplain, note the upstream corner(s) of the structure.