

Hurricane Matthew - Week Sixteen Update: January 27, 2017

Highlights for the Town of Hilton Head Island

This will be the last of the weekly updates. In February we will transition to a twice-monthly written update provided at the Town Council meetings and posted thereafter.

- Last week we reported that we received authorization from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) for up to \$500,000 in reimbursement for clearing storm debris in our storm water drainage system. We skipped over the details, and circumstances have now changed. We had signed a “grant agreement” presented to us by the South Carolina regional office of the USDA. We then returned that document to them for their signature and authorization to proceed. Before they could execute the agreement at their end, President Trump issued an executive order freezing all USDA and EPA grants. Neither we nor the regional office of the USDA knows how, if at all, this impacts our grant agreement. But they have ordered us not to proceed until they receive clarification.
- As explained in last week’s update, for storm water system clean-up, federal regulations require that we first work through the USDA and its grant program for reimbursement of expenses. Only after we have exhausted the USDA’s resources can we turn to FEMA for reimbursement consideration. As such, storm water clean-up efforts are currently at a standstill.
- All areas of the Town have completed their first pass for roadside debris clean-up with the exception of Sea Pines, Hilton Head Plantation and the roads recently denied by FEMA. Sea Pines is expected to be completed this weekend and Hilton Head Plantation has roughly a week to go before their first pass is completed. The Town is working to address debris removal on those roads that were recently denied by FEMA.
- As we approach the two million cubic yard milestone for debris collected from the roadsides, the numbers have become so large as to defy comprehension. For those who are interested in the numbers, the following link will take you to data on total collections and collections by neighbourhood:
www.hiltonheadislandsc.gov/recovery/debrisinfo.cfm
- One interesting statistic on debris clearance, however, regards the amount of debris collected in comparison to the land area of the community. For Beaufort County, the 1 million cubic yards (CYs) that they collected works out to about 2.5 CY’s per acre. On Hilton Head Island, the 1.8 million CYs we have collected translates to 93 CYs per acre.
- 52 units are working simultaneously to pick up disaster debris in all public and private roadway areas. A lot of the crews have been reduced to single haul trucks to access confined areas. Additionally as the number of leaners and hangers has reduced, the number of bucket trucks in use has gone down. At one point we had as many as 80 crews working. Two weeks ago we were at 71 crews.