



In the bigger picture, you may benefit from harvests of irrigated farm fields. Everyone benefits and, with benefits, also come responsibilities.

The City and irrigation companies ask that you do your part and do not deposit trash in the ditches or along the banks. Some debris occurs naturally, like tree branches, leaves and undergrowth. However, trash generated by people, like grass clippings, tires, used oil, solvents, pesticides, and so on, also ends up in the ditches and pollutes adjacent streams and lakes as well. It takes time and money to clean the ditches before the water reaches its final destination. **It is prohibited by City Code to deposit waste in open areas or irrigation ditches.**

Feeding wildlife along ditches is highly discouraged because a ready food supply attracts rats and other rodents. No one, especially children, should play in or around ditches, especially when water is flowing as

ditch banks can give way and a person could fall into the water. Swimmers and 'tubers' can get caught in the flow or may get trapped in a culvert.

At times, maintenance performed by the irrigation companies may seem to be in conflict with the community's environmental and wildlife values. Property owners may object to the irrigation company removing trees, or expect the irrigation company to remove trees that are actually the property owner's responsibility. The irrigation companies have the legal right and the need to run water and maintain their ditches. These issues can be difficult to resolve and the appropriate actions and sharing of responsibility depend on the specific circumstances. However, when the City, irrigation companies and citizens work together, shareholders' needs can be met while wildlife and environmental benefits are preserved for residents.

Who to Call

Many City departments are involved with irrigation ditches but your first point of contact should always be the ditch company.

- Arthur Ditch, Larimer County Canal #2, New Mercer Ditch, Warren Lake Ditch, Fossil Creek/Mail Creek 970-218-0726 or 970-420-7019
- Boxelder Ditch 970-214-6451 or 970-420-7019
- Lake Canal 970-420-7503 or 970-420-7019
- Larimer and Weld Canal 970-454-3377
- Jackson Ditch (Water Supply and Storage) 970-482-3433
- Pleasant Valley and Lake Canal 970-214-7085
- Little Cache la Poudre Ditch 970-454-3377
- Fossil Creek Reservoir Inlet (North Poudre Irrigation Company) 970-568-3612
- Cache la Poudre Reservoir Inlet 970-352-0222

For More Information

- visit fcgov.com/stormwater
- call 970-212-2900



fcgov.com/utilities
utilities@fcgov.com
970-212-2900
V/TDD: 711

Auxiliary aids and services are available for persons with disabilities.
Esta información puede ser traducida, sin costo para usted. 20-22358 6-20



IRRIGATION DITCHES



Then and Now

Irrigation ditches and canals carry water from the Cache la Poudre River to users in and around Fort Collins. The ditch water is used for irrigation in lieu of treated water by Colorado State University, the City of Fort Collins, Poudre School District, local businesses, area farmers and private citizens. Since the 1860s, this system of irrigation ditches has played an important role in the development of the Cache la Poudre valley.

The first ditches were small structures built by farmers to divert water from the river over short distances to irrigate nearby farm fields. In the late 1800s, ditches were enlarged and extended to irrigate land further from the river. Today, much of the irrigated land has been developed so irrigation ditches also carry stormwater (water from rainstorms that collects on streets and low-lying areas), in addition to diverted river water, from these areas. Fort Collins Utilities has completed some projects to separate irrigation and storm runoff where practical to prevent flooding and continues to evaluate additional projects for the future.

The City routinely receives questions about the operation and maintenance of irrigation ditches. The need for maintenance is increasing, in part due to the dumping of trash and debris along ditch banks and into the ditches. Because irrigation ditches provide many benefits to our community, we are asking you to help us keep the ditches clean.



DID YOU KNOW?

Obstruction and pollution of ditches is prohibited by City Code Sec. 10-305.

Ownership

Typically, the water in ditches is owned by shareholders in non-profit irrigation companies run by a board of directors. Shareholders have the right to use a portion

of the water. The board hires a superintendent to oversee the operation and maintenance of the ditches. The land the ditches run through is often owned by adjacent property owners and the irrigation companies have easements that give them the legal right, but not necessarily the obligation, to maintain the ditches and ditch banks to ensure they can deliver water to their shareholders.

Maintenance

Water flows in the ditches primarily when it is needed and available for irrigation or storage in lakes and reservoirs, or sometimes following a large storm. In April or May, the gates are opened on the Poudre River and water flows into the ditches.

Ditches are maintained by the irrigation companies. The most common maintenance problem is the trash, branches, grass and other debris that accumulates in ditches. When the water is running, it picks up this debris and carries it downstream where it clogs gates and grates and may cause flooding. Access along the sides of ditches is necessary to remove the debris. Maintenance generally occurs in the spring before the ditches begin carrying water, but it can occur any time of the year.

Trees, brush and weeds growing along the banks interfere with ditch access and also contribute to bank erosion and seepage. To remedy these problems, vegetation is often burned along the banks in the spring. When trees become a problem, they are usually removed.

Benefits and Responsibilities

Even if you are not a shareholder of an irrigation company or use the water carried in the ditches, you receive benefits indirectly. Stormwater that collects in your neighborhood may end up in one of the ditches. Residents along ditches may see them as habitat for a variety of wildlife or a natural area to enjoy.

IRRIGATION DITCHES AND CANALS
IN FORT COLLINS AREA

