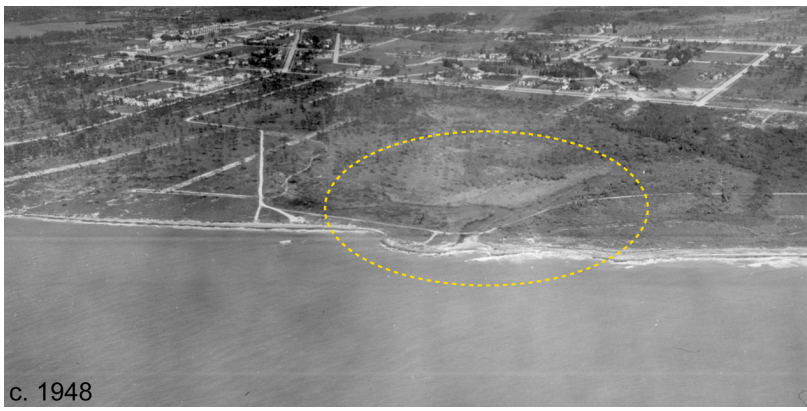
FLAMINGO DITCH FACT SHEET

The Flamingo Ditch, also known as Beach Outfall 5, is an important open channel that conveys stormwater drainage from a 212-acre residential area into the Gulf

History of Flamingo Ditch

The Flamingo Ditch is a low-lying, natural land feature on Venice island. Prior to development, the Flamingo Ditch was a natural tidal wetland that drained to the Gulf. This area was developed in the early 1970s, a time when there were no stormwater and elevation standards private developers had to adhere to. Consequently, many of the roadways and homes were built below flood elevation levels. This area regularly experiences flooding problems and has been designated a Special Flood Hazard Area for over 40 years.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Past Improvements

In 2013, the City secured private temporary construction easements from ditch owners to complete a comprehensive muck removal project to improve water quality. This included removing exotic plants and replanting mangroves and native vegetation, which also had the beneficial effect of improving stormwater flow.

In 2018, the City removed the wooden box culvert at the beach, which had been restricting flow from the Flamingo Ditch. This project improved stormwater drainage flow during rain events.

Ownership of Flamingo Ditch

Flamingo Ditch is privately owned, as the property lines for the adjacent residences extend to and meet at approximately the centerline of the ditch.

An existing 20-foot-wide easement is in place over part of the ditch which grants the City limited access and rights. This existing easement extends east through the Golden Beach platted subdivision with its terminus at Harbor Drive. This easement does not obligate the City to maintain or improve the ditch with public funds

The State of Florida retains ownership of the outfall at the beach where Flamingo Ditch discharges to the Gulf.

FLAMINGO DITCH

Why does Flamingo Ditch flood?

- Low land elevations and lack of capacity relative to the drainage basin size is the primary reason this area floods.
- Stormwater flow can exceed ditch capacity during rain events. Storm surge increases water levels and inhibits drainage to the Gulf. When these coincide, compound flooding events can occur.
- Once water in the drainage basin exceeds five (5) feet (NAVD 88), homes, streets and properties begin to experience flooding due to their low elevation.
- Beach/dune elevation is high compared to the Flamingo Ditch, inhibiting drainage to the Gulf. Stormwater can be further impounded by storms that move sand into the ditch opening.

What caused flooding during Hurricanes Helene and Milton?

Both Hurricanes Helene and Milton in 2024 brought a record storm surge to the Venice area. This devastating storm surge over-topped the beach and dune system and inundated the Flamingo Ditch area due to the low land elevations. There was little rainfall from either event, further confirming this flooding was due to storm surge inundation. These hurricanes caused the same coastal flooding conditions in many other neighborhoods throughout Venice and surrounding communities.

Feasibility Study

This study, launched in November 2024 by engineering firm CPE, will analyze potential concepts to improve Flamingo Ditch drainage while factoring in cost feasibility, ownership, and easement issues in order to provide the City with recommendations. Preliminary findings by CPE presented to City Council on March 11, 2025, include:

- Flooding issues exist on a recurring basis supported by public comment, literature review, and preliminary model evaluations.
- The hurricanes caused extensive flooding from storm surge that severely impacted homes.
- This is a twofold challenge — stormwater drainage and storm surge inundation.

Coastal Protection Engineering LLC (CPE), founded in 2019 by industry-leading coastal engineers with decades of experience, specializes in restoring, managing, and protecting coastal resources and infrastructure and they currently serve as the City's coastal engineering consultant.

CPE presented preliminary findings at the March 11, 2025, City Council meeting and will be producing a final report including recommendations.

The City remains committed to long-term adaptation strategies for vulnerable areas throughout the community. It is important to remember that natural disasters are common in Florida, and complete protection from events like storm surge or historic rainfall is impossible. Changing weather patterns and environmental factors can increase flood risks, which are not limited to coastal areas — flooding can occur anywhere it rains. Flood insurance offers the best financial protection from natural disasters, ensuring faster recovery and peace of mind. Homeowners with older properties should explore ways to enhance flood resilience or mitigation for their properties such as the Florida Division of Emergency Management Elevate Florida program.

Venice, FL
City on the Gulf