

What is the Pinal County Flood Control District?

The District is a political subdivision of the state of Arizona. The Pinal County Board of Supervisors serves as the District's Board of Directors. Our Mission is to reduce the risk of flooding to life and property by managing our floodplains, regulating development, identifying flood hazards, and by providing public outreach and response.

What is the purpose of the Pinal County Flood Control District?

Adapted from ARS48-3603: Powers, duties and immunities of district and board: The purpose of the Pinal County Flood Control District is: 1) Minimize flood damages and the violence of flood events, 2) Prevent unwise encroachment and development within floodplains, 3) Protect the life and property of citizens living within floodplains, 4) Enhance property values of abutting floodplain areas, 5) Protect public health, 6) Reduce financial burden on communities with land subject to flood damages, 6) Construct and maintain flood control facilities, 7) Regulate land and development within designated floodplain areas, 8) Levy taxes and issue bonds to finance its flood control system(s), and 9) Acquire real property through eminent domain, donation or other means.

How is the Pinal County Flood Control District Funded?

A secondary property tax paid by Pinal County property owners provides the District's primary funding. The District seeks financial project partnerships from Federal, state and local agencies to supplement tax revenue. Other revenue sources include sales of excess land and other assets, permitting fees, and fund balance interest.

What does the Pinal County Flood Control District regulate?

The Pinal County Flood Control District regulates all development within Special Flood Hazard Areas (areas mapped as a 100-year floodplain by the Federal Emergency Management Agency), floodplains associated with watercourses that have a 100-year discharge of 200 cubic per second or greater, erosion hazard zones associated with washes/watercourses, and locally mapped floodplains. **The Pinal County Flood Control District does not regulate runoff coming off of rooftops, parking lots, or from areas with a contributing watershed that results in a 100-Year discharge of less than 200cfs.**

What is the difference between Floodplain Administration and Flood Control?

The floodplain administrator works with the FEMA flood Insurance program and administers the floodplain ordinance. The floodplain administrator is funded through the Flood Control District (see above). The floodplain administrator works with the public to inform them about flood dangers and to help the public understand the flood insurance program. The administrator is the local authority for the nationwide program and is charged with keeping the County in compliance with its mandates. If the County is not in compliance with the Flood Insurance program, we lose funding and insurance rates increase.

What is a local floodplain and how does it differ from FEMA floodplains?

FEMA floodplains are mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. However, there are many flood prone areas in Pinal County that are not mapped by FEMA. Local floodplains are mapped by or for the Pinal County Flood Control District to assess flood hazards affecting citizens and property. Development in locally mapped floodplains must meet the same standards as if it were built in a FEMA floodplain.

The wash on my property is eroding or experiencing sediment deposition, what should I do?

Erosion, lateral migration, and sedimentation within washes is considered a natural process and is expected to occur. This is why Pinal County requires structures to be set back from the banks of a wash. It is recommended that the wash be left alone in its natural state because altering it can have unintended consequences. If existing structures are being threatened by erosion or lateral migration from a wash, it is recommended that you consult with an Arizona Registered Professional Engineer. An engineer can evaluate the situation and make a recommendation to protect the structure. Note that a floodplain use permit may be required before making any improvements to the site or changes to the wash.

I experienced property/structure damage from a flood, what assistance can the Pinal County Flood Control District provide me?

If your house or property was flooded during a storm event you should contact the Pinal County Flood Control District. A representative will contact you and/or visit the site to review the cause of the flooding and can provide information on how to remediate the damage to the structure or property. District staff can provide maps and additional resources that may help protect the property and structures from future flood events. Note that a floodplain use permit may be required to undergo repair to structures or alteration of property.

Other than providing advice and information, the District is limited in the type of assistance that can be provided to residents. The Pinal County Flood Control District is prohibited from spending public money on private property. Pinal County can only expend resources on public infrastructure or on projects that result in benefits to the public. It is the sole responsibility of property owners to perform any necessary work on their own private properties and obtain any necessary permits. This may include non-county maintained roadways as well as private easements. However, assistance for storm or flood damage recovery may be available from various charitable or volunteer organizations. Please contact Pinal County Emergency Management at 520-866-6684 for more information.

Information regarding flood events is used to determine where funds should be allocated for future improvements projects and where the floodplain maps may need to be updated.

Who is responsible for maintenance of drainage facilities on or near my property?

If you live in a subdivision, it is typically, the Homeowners Association responsibility to maintain drainage facilities, however, sometimes the individual property owners have responsibility as well. Consult the subdivision's plat, the grading and drainage plan, and/or the covenants, conditions and restrictions (CC&Rs) for more information. These documents should outline who is responsible for maintenance. On larger washes or regional drainage facilities, a local Flood Protection District or Pinal County may be responsible for maintenance.

There's water in my retention basin, who comes out to help?

Most retention basins in Pinal County are privately owned; Pinal County does not provide assistance with basin maintenance nor can we pump out retention basins. If you have a retention basin on your property then it is likely your responsibility to provide maintenance. Note that the Pinal County Drainage Ordinance requires that all retention basins drain within 36hrs via evaporation and/or percolation to prevent mosquito infestations.

If I want to install a block wall or fence, are there any places I should avoid?

Block walls and fences can create some of the most serious flooding problems. Avoid constructing walls across any channel or wash. If you need to cross a wash or channel, you may need to obtain a floodplain use permit and the crossing may need to be designed by an Arizona Registered Professional Engineer. Walls or fences should not encroach into any drainage easement, adversely affect the natural conveyance of flows, and must follow the Arizona Revised State Statute 48-3613 for management of floodwater.

What is considered a wash?

Offsite storm water drainage that is collected and concentrated in a channel or low point on the ground that carries water from an upstream area through a property and continues downstream of the property. Other names for washes include watercourse, arroyo, and channel.

Can I re-route a wash on my property?

Although generally not feasible in most situations, you can reroute a wash within your property provided that historic drainage patterns are maintained and the plan is engineered. That is to say that the wash must enter and exit the property *in the same location and in the same manner* such that there would be no negative affects to drainage on adjacent properties.

Rerouting a wash properly is a difficult endeavor that requires the services of an Arizona Registered Professional Engineer and permitting through the Pinal County Flood Control District. If not done properly, a rerouted wash could create a hazard and liability for you and your neighbors. In addition to this, you could be found in violation of several local, state, and federal laws and potentially face significant fines. Having an engineer analyze the wash protects you from liability and results in a proposed re-route with no adverse impacts to adjacent property owners.

What is required for building in a floodplain?

A floodplain use permit is required for any development that is proposed to occur in the floodplain. Supplemental documentation may also be required such as: An elevation certificate prepared by an Arizona Registered Professional Engineer or Arizona Registered Land Surveyor, a grading and drainage plan designed by a civil engineer, a drainage report or floodplain analysis, an engineered foundation plan (in some mobile home permitting situations), and various other documents may be required. Contact Pinal County Flood Control District at 520-866-6441 to find out what the specific permitting requirements will be for a particular property.

How far from a wash do I need to build my house? Why?

All buildings must be set back from washes to add a means of protection from erosion and lateral migration of the wash's main channel. Pinal County requires a minimum setback of 50ft from the established bank of the wash. In some cases, very large washes will require a 300ft setback. The setback is measured from the bank of the wash. Setbacks can be reduced if an Arizona Registered Professional Engineer provides a report or analysis that states that a lesser setback will be safe or provides a design for bank protection within the wash.

Is my property buildable?

This is a difficult question that cannot be easily answered by Pinal County. An Arizona Registered Professional Engineer can determine the feasibility of placing a structure on a property given the characteristics of the site and the applicable regulations. Pinal County can only determine if a proposed structure will meet minimum standards and cannot comment on feasibility or build-ability.

I am looking at purchasing some property in Pinal County and need to know if it's a good investment. Should I buy this property?

This is a difficult question that cannot be answered by Pinal County. Pinal County cannot give real estate advice to the public. We can however provide you with information that can assist you in making a decision. Any records pertaining to a particular property can be obtained by submitting a public records request. <http://pinalcountyz.gov/Departments/PublicWorks/Pages/Documents.aspx>

Can I install a culvert on a wash crossing my property? How big does the culvert need to be?

All culverts crossing regulated washes/watercourse need to be designed by an Arizona Registered Professional Engineer. The required size of the culvert will depend on several factors including the characteristics of the wash, the location of the proposed crossing, and susceptibility to sediment deposition. Improperly designed or constructed culverts could create a flood hazard and liability for the owner and neighboring properties.

My neighbor filled in a wash, what can I do?

By Arizona Revised State Statute 48-3613 it is illegal for a person to divert, retard or obstruct the flow of waters in any watercourse without securing written authorization from the board of the district in which the watercourse is located. Altering a wash may also be a violation of Pinal County's Floodplain Ordinance. Please contact Pinal County Flood Control at 520-866-6411 to have the issue investigated. However, it is sometimes the case that Pinal County Flood Control doesn't have the authority to proceed with enforcement. In this case, the issue will be a civil matter between the person who filled in the wash and all damaged property owners. If you believe that your neighbor has impacted you, we recommend approaching your neighbor and calmly explaining the problem to them. If this effort to resolve the problem is unsuccessful, you may need to consider private litigation.

Why Would I Need Flood Insurance?

The majority of Americans are unaware that homeowner's insurance policies do not cover them for damages associated with flooding, yet flooding is more common than fire damage. Would you ever think of not having fire insurance? Contact your insurance agent and ask about obtaining flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program.

How much does flood insurance cost?

The cost of flood insurance depends on different factors. If the structure is located in a special flood hazard area (SFHA) then cost will partially depend on elevation of the structure. If the structure is outside a SFHA then it may be possible to get a Preferred Risk Policy at a greatly reduced rate. For a discount when purchasing flood insurance, be sure to tell your insurance agent that Pinal County has earned a level 7 in the Community Rating System. Flood Control District staff are available to answer specific questions about flood insurance and can help provide elevation certificate records, grandfathering letters, and flood zone determinations.

How much does an elevation certificate cost?

If Pinal County has an existing elevation certificate for your property, we can provide you a copy at no cost. However, if we do not have an elevation certificate then you will need to hire an Arizona Registered Land Surveyor to complete one for you. The cost can vary significantly depending on a variety of factors and typically costs between \$500 and \$1,500. We recommend getting quotes from several surveyors before hiring one to complete your elevation certificate.

There is water ponding after recent rains and now we have mosquitos. Can you help us?

Please contact the Environmental Health Department at 520-866-6864 or by visiting their webpage at <http://www.pinalcountyz.gov/EnvironmentalHealth/Pages/Home.aspx>

What is the best way to find out what flood zone a property is in?

Flood Zone information is available from a number sources. You can view the maps on the Flood Control Map Viewer located at: <http://www.pinalcountyz.gov/InformationTechnology/Pages/GIS.aspx>

To view the flood insurance rate maps and flood zone information on FEMA's website, go to: <https://msc.fema.gov/portal/home>

You can also submit a formal request to receive property specific information regarding flood zones and flood hazards by completing a form located at:

<http://www.pinalcountyz.gov/PublicWorks/FloodControl/Pages/FloodInfoRequest.aspx>

I want to put in a shade structure for my animals. Does that require a flood plain use permit?

If the shade structure is within a floodplain then a floodplain use permit is required. A shade structure will need to be constructed out of flood resistant materials (for the areas located below the flood elevation. In addition, the property owner may need to sign and submit a non-conversion agreement which is a document that ensures that the property owner will not convert the shade structure into an enclosed, habitable structure in the future.

How much extra time is involved in permitting when a floodplain use permit is required?

This depends on the complexity and type of floodplain use permit that is being applied for as well as the quality of the documents that are being submitted with the permit application. For single family homes and most residential development, a floodplain use permit can often be issued within 2-5 weeks of submittal. This is to allow time for District staff to complete a compliance review and for the applicant to address any comments or problems with their permit. In many cases a floodplain use permit can be issued before the building permit is approved. More complicated permit applications can take several months to be approved. A chart showing the Pinal County Flood Control District's official review time frames, is located at:

<http://www.pinalcountyz.gov/PublicWorks/FloodControl/Pages/FloodplainPermit.aspx>

The culverts under the roadway are blocked with debris. Who do I call to get them cleaned out?

Please contact the Public Works, Road Maintenance Branch at 520-866-6419 or by emailing PCRoadMaintenance@pinalcountyz.gov

The growth of vegetation in the wash is causing flows to be diverted. Does the Flood Control District clear out the vegetation?

The Pinal County Flood Control District does not clean or maintain washes. The Pinal County Flood Control District is prohibited from doing any work on private property and on land that has not been established as a flood control facility. In addition, vegetation growth in and near a wash is considered a natural process and typically does not require maintenance. If you believe that natural vegetation is causing a problem on your property, it is recommended that you consult with an Arizona Registered Professional Engineer for advice.

I've lived here for 30 years and never seen it flood, how can I be in a floodplain?

The length of time that one has lived in a specific location is not an indicator or predictor of flood risk. The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) floodplain maps depict floodplains that have a 1% annual chance of occurring in any given year. Another way of stating this is that there is a 99% chance that a 100-year flood would **not** occur in any given year. Because the floodplain maps are based on the probability of a flood event occurring, a property located in the 100-year floodplain has only a 26% chance of experiencing a flood during a 30 year period. While the most widely studied historic flood in Pinal County occurred in 1983, other major floods have occurred in 1915 and 1993 as well.