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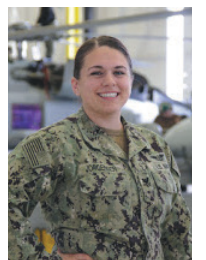
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DD6 addresses
Fannett flooding



'They kept their promise...'

Fannett resident says work is underway to ease neighborhood flooding

As rain poured down and water rose around her West Clubb Road home on May 17, 2021, Julie Meadows reached out to The Examiner, and Publisher Don Dodd, in turn, contacted Jefferson County Drainage District No. 6 (DD6) General Manager Dr. Joseph Majdalani. Dodd wanted to know what could be done to alleviate flooding in the Fannett neighborhood where Meadows, her mother, brother, cousins and friends all reside. In response, Majdalani and Senior Project Manager John Murff jumped into a truck and into action.

"We received notification from The Examiner and a resident living on West Clubb Road in Jefferson County expressing concern about flooding," Dr. Majdalani recalled. "John Murff and I went out there to see what we could do."

"They came out here immediately," Meadows said describing DD6's rapid reaction.

Dr. Majdalani and Murff saw a "sad" sight when they arrived at Meadows' home. At that time, floodwaters were creeping toward her house, and there was nothing they could immediately do to stop it.

By the time the rain finally stopped, "I had six inches of rain that came through my house," said Meadows.

"It's devastating to see people's homes flooding," said Murff. "I've seen people standing in waist-high water after a major rain event. We came out and wanted to figure out what was going on at Julie's house. It makes me feel proud when we can help the people in our district."

The DD6 team set to work, examining Meadows' property to see what was causing the inundation into her home. According to Dr. Majdalani, it was partially due to the extreme weather on May 17 going into May 18. During that storm, the Green Acres area and the Fannett area where Meadows



Murff



Majdalani

lives experienced a "high-intensity rain event that caused localized flooding," with 18 inches of rain falling on them in a 24-hour period. Even more damaging, "Sixteen of the 18

inches fell within 12 consecutive hours," said Majdalani.

Back at Meadows' house, there was another big problem that seemed to be causing additional flooding there: an

overgrown drainage ditch at the back of her yard, an issue that would take time, planning and permissions to tackle.

"Julie Meadows flooded as a result of both Harvey and Imelda," Majdalani said. "DD6 maintenance units were dispatched to investigate the complaint. It was determined that DD6 did not have right of way/easement on Drainage Ditches No 505-B and 505-B2 that service the area. These ditches were found to be heavily populated with trees and overgrown with vegetation."

"On May 18, district staff started the process of securing the needed right of way/easements, which requires topographic survey, preparation of legal descriptions, cooperation of property owners, and board action."

"Dr. Majdalani's office got me connected with John Murff," Meadows said. "I went and met him at his office. He is a great guy, and he was very helpful in explaining how things work. He assured me that they were going to work on this drainage ditch behind my house. He explained right-of-way to me, and he told me, 'Julie, if you can help me get some of these signatures, I promise we will clear this drainage ditch as soon as we can.'"

Since then, the DD6 team, with Meadows' help, has worked to get necessary land rights and come up with a plan to mitigate flooding for dozens of Fannett households that, for years, have faced the risk of inundation with every hurricane, tropical storm or heavy rain event. Recently, after speaking with neighbors and helping DD6 get in contact with property owners over the last six months, she called for a progress report. She ended up getting a lot more than that. Once again, she got to see DD6 take action.

"I hadn't seen anything of them for a while, so the last big rain I called up





Julie Meadows and Patsy Hanchett

there and I talked to Mr. Murff,” she shared. “He said, ‘I’m waiting on one more signature, and I’m supposed to get it today.’ Two days later, I saw a truck, and I called my mom. I said, ‘Momma, did you just see that? DD6 just passed.’”

According to Meadows, DD6 brought a huge machine, the Komatsu P290 LC hydraulic excavator with an attachment that grinds full-sized trees to mulch.

“It takes down trees and mulches them down at the same time,” Meadows observed.

In a matter of a couple of days, DD6 had already started clearing the ditch and surrounding overgrowth, creating a mulch-carpeted clearing at the start of the ditch around the corner from Meadows’ house going back into heavy woods, which will soon also be ground down to chips.

Besides clearing drainage ditches, Majdalani hopes to secure funding and property rights to build a large detention basin, which will further alleviate flooding in the nearby neighborhoods.

“Progress has been made in our continuing efforts to provide flood relief to the West Clubb Road area of Jefferson County,” Majdalani described. “Drainage easements have been secured and property acquisitions have been completed along existing drainage ditches serving the western portion of West Clubb Road... The District has begun clearing trees and overgrown vegetation along and within the ditches, which will be followed by the removal of accumulated sediment from the ditch flowlines to restore drainage capacity.

“Additionally, a proposed \$13.5M project to serve the West Clubb Road area has been selected by FEMA for consideration as a potential candidate for future grant funding award. The project includes the construction of a 1,000-acre-foot (325.9 million-gallon) detention basin and enlargement of drainage crossings under West Clubb Road.”

Majdalani said Meadows was “instrumental” in helping DD6 quickly contact landowners in her neighborhood, which allowed DD6 to get the easements and rights-of-way needed

for the project. He says DD6 continues to work toward securing even more access to hundreds of miles of ditches the district is charged with maintaining.

“The district’s 502-square-mile service area is served by 1,070 miles of ditches. However, the district currently has right-of-way/access easements secured on only 63% of these ditches,” he described. “Over the last year, the district secured 130 miles of new right-of-way/access easements and plans to actively pursue the remaining 395 miles to provide access to the entire drainage system to better serve the drainage needs of our community.”

Meadows encourages landowners to allow DD6 access to drainage ditches on their properties to prevent flooding in their neighborhoods. She says she isn’t “excited” for the next big rain event, but she is “hopeful” that once DD6 completes their flood mitigation plan for her neighborhood that her home won’t flood during the next big rain.

“I can kind of understand the flooding during hurricanes, but the rainstorm... We didn’t expect to flood during a rainstorm,” she said. “I feel in my heart and I know that when this is done I’m not going to have the flooding problem anymore.”

Meadows’ mother, Patsy Hanchett, lives in a house on a hill behind her daughter’s home. She did not experience flooding in May due to her elevation, but she has seen Meadows’ house flood time and time again. When she found out DD6 had started work on clearing the drainage ditch, she went over to take a look for herself.

“It looks great! I am very happy to see them out here,” she said. “They are doing a good job.”

Meadows is also pleased with the progress and impressed that the DD6 team has kept their word to her.

“They kept their promise,” she said. “You don’t know how happy I am that they’re out here doing this.”

Learn more about DD6 projects on the district’s website: dd6.org.

— Sharon Brooks