

Weekly Update: December 13, 2006



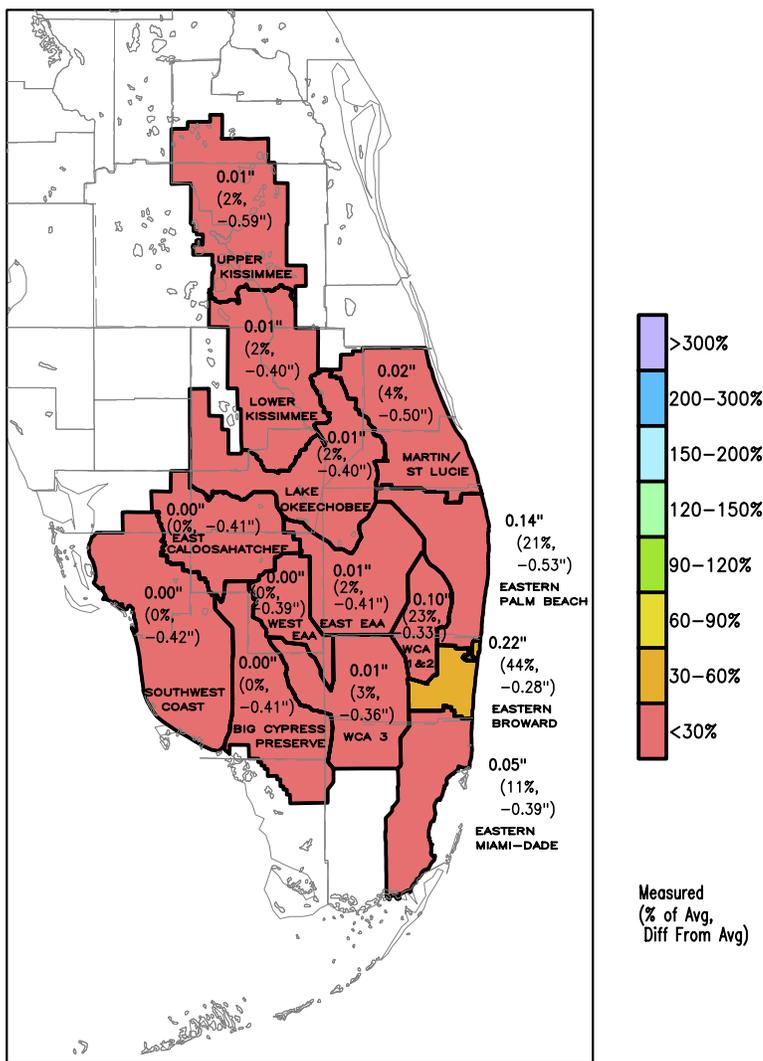
just the
FACTs

This fact sheet is provided as a reference to encourage a greater understanding of the various issues related to managing water in south Florida.

State of the Water Management System

To underscore our commitment to keep you informed, we will send this update weekly. We encourage you to share this water resources information with your constituents.

SFWM District Rainfall
06-DEC-2006 to 12-DEC-2006



DISTRICT-WIDE: 0.02" (4%, -0.43")

GrADS: COLA/IGES

2006-12-12-19:02



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Rainfall overview:

- District-wide rainfall for the past week was negligible.
- The rainfall outlook for the next seven days is for near average rainfall.

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System-wide overview:

A cold front that will stall over the District on Thursday night will bring some rainfall. A low along the frontal boundary will then track across the District, bringing some locally heavy rains on Friday.

Lake Okeechobee — The lake stage is approximately 12.07 feet NGVD 29 (10.77 feet NAVD 88), 0.13 feet lower since this date last week and declining slowly. Surface inflows are 7 cubic feet per second. Surface outflows are 1,041 cubic feet per second, excluding S-77 and S-308 where discharge data are not reported. Two thirds of the monthly submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) sampling has been completed and plants were found at two of the 31 sites visited thus far. These preliminary results suggest a decline in density and distribution of SAV from last month. Less than half of the sites had adequate light reaching the bottom to support plant growth, possibly in response to recent windy weather. Bulrush densities appear to be stable in both treated and untreated plots

Upper Chain of Lakes/Kissimmee Basin — During the last seven days, the upper basin received 0.01 inches of rainfall to bring the 30-day total to 0.65 inches, which is 26 percent of the long-term average. The lower basin received no rain, bringing the 30-day total to 0.42 inches, which is 21 percent of the long-term average. All of the lakes remain below regulation schedule.

St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries — In the St. Lucie Estuary, no discharges occurred at S-80 during the past week. Salinity has increased slightly in the estuary, and all readings are near the upper limit of the preferred range. Salinity conditions in the estuary are good. Complete discharge records for S-79 in the Caloosahatchee Estuary were unavailable at the time of this report. Salinity conditions in the upper estuary are poor, but good in the lower estuary and San Carlos Bay.

Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) — Due to low rainfall, the Everglades water levels continue to decrease everywhere. However, water depths are still reasonable considering the low amount of rainfall these last few months, ranging from a low of 0.5 feet in the northwest corner of WCA-3A to a high of 2.5 feet in the southern region of WCA-3A. Except for the northwest section of WCA-3A, most areas continue to be deep enough as to not initiate early wading bird nesting.

Everglades National Park — Water levels were down last week across the Park wetlands. The panhandle saw a seasonable 0.6 inches recession for the week, Craighead Pond's water level dropped by 0.8 inches, and Taylor Slough Bridge saw the largest water level decline for these stations, dropping 1.8 inches since last week.

Note: This rainfall information is based on rain gauges within the Park. The map on page one captures District rain gauge data only.

Florida Bay — Florida Bay salinity concentrations saw less influence of water flow reversals in the coastal creeks and embayments than in recent weeks.

** SFWMD water managers and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers work together to manage Lake Okeechobee. Water releases from the lake are made in accordance with a federally authorized regulation schedule based on many factors such as time of year, current water conditions, predicted rainfall and lake level.*

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Area Water Restrictions — Total rainfall through the first 11 months of 2006 currently ranks as the second-lowest on record at only 38.35 inches District-wide, approximately 77 percent of the historical average and very nearly equal to the record low of 38.31 inches set during the first 11 months of 1938.

In addition, rain patterns that disproportionately favored southern and southwestern portions of the District have left many areas to the north and northeast in 1-in-25-year dry spells. This is a concern for water managers because low rainfall at the top of the system typically means less water is available for storage and consumption District-wide.

At present, the water level of Lake Okeechobee, a bellwether measurement of the District's water supply, is more than three feet – or 21 percent – below its historical average for this time of year. Water levels in Lake Okeechobee are a major concern for water managers because the Lake serves as the region's primary back-up water supply.

Mandatory Phase 1 water restrictions remain in force for the Lake Okeechobee Service Area as well as the Northern Indian Prairie Basin, which comprise the Everglades Agricultural Area, portions of Hendry, Glades, Lee, Okeechobee, Palm Beach and Martin Counties, as well as agricultural areas to the south of Lake Istokpoga in Highlands County.

Classified as *moderate* water shortage declarations, these orders predominantly impact agricultural, industrial and commercial water users as well as public water supply utilities in these areas; withdrawals from the Caloosahatchee River; and a relatively small number of residential users whose water source is Lake Okeechobee or any of the surface water canals recharged by the Lake.



A formal water shortage warning remains in place for the District's Lower East Coast Service Area, which comprises Monroe, Miami-Dade, Broward and eastern Palm Beach Counties. Though no mandatory water restrictions have been issued as part of this warning, the District is encouraging both residential and agricultural water users here to voluntarily reduce their water consumption as a preemptive measure to avoid or forestall potential water shortage orders and mandatory water restrictions later in the dry season.



More information is available at www.sfwmd.gov/shortage.

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Other District News and Happenings —

- The C-44 Reservoir/Stormwater Treatment Area Groundbreaking was held on Dec. 11. As a component of the larger Indian River Lagoon-South restoration project, this *Acceler8* project will capture and treat local stormwater runoff from the 116,516-acre C-44 basin in Martin County, decreasing flows and improving water quality into the St. Lucie Estuary.
- U.S. District Court Judge Cecilia Altonaga ruled on Monday that a federal National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit is required by the District to continue operating pumping stations S-2, S-3 and S-4 for regional flood control and water supply purposes.
- The District initiated construction for Golden Gate Weir #2 this week. This structure is being upgraded from a fixed crest weir with no flexibility to an Obermeyer Gate that will allow maximum flexibility for operation. While improving the level of flood control during major storm events, this structure will also allow for incremental releases for fresh water to the downstream estuaries, enhancing coastal resources. Seasonally, the upgraded structure has the ability to retain more water for aquifer recharge and significantly enhances the District's ability to manage water resources in the Golden Gate Basin effectively.
- The Department of Environmental Protection and the District announced completion of more than 5,000 acres of additional treatment wetlands to clean water flowing into the famed River of Grass. Three weeks ahead of schedule, three stormwater treatment areas (STAs) in the Everglades Agricultural Area were expanded, adding the equivalent of 3,878 football fields of wetlands to an existing network of treatment areas. Florida is enhancing stormwater treatment areas as part of its \$1.8 billion *Acceler8* initiative. The three initial STA upgrades – at STA-2 in Palm Beach County and STA-5 and STA-6 in Hendry County – add 5,120 acres to the state's 36,000 acres of existing treatment wetlands. When complete, the *Acceler8* upgrades will provide an additional 18,000 acres of treatment wetlands in the Everglades Agricultural Area. The constructed wetlands contain aquatic plants that naturally cleanse phosphorus from water before it enters the Everglades. Since 1994, constructed wetlands together with improved farming practices have prevented 2,200 tons of phosphorus from entering the Everglades – cutting phosphorus loads to the River of Grass by 71 percent.

Did you know? The South Florida Water Management District manages and protects the water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply. Want to hear more? It would be our pleasure to meet with your organization to give a presentation and answer your questions. If interested, please contact Doris Urban at 800-432-2045 or 561-686-8800, ext. 6202.