

Weekly Update: January 4, 2006



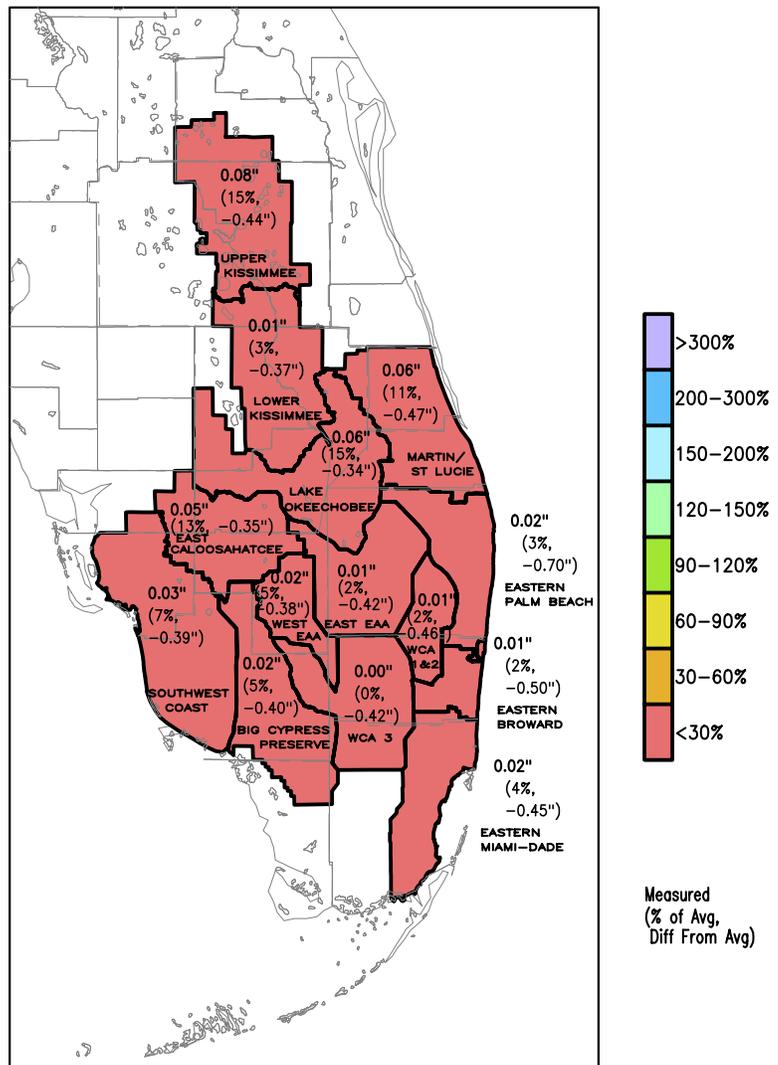
just the
FACTs

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.

SFWMD Rainfall
28-DEC-2005 to 03-JAN-2006



DISTRICT-WIDE: 0.03" (7%, -0.42")

GrADS: COLA/IGES

2006-01-03-15:31



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Rainfall overview:

- District-wide rainfall for the past week was negligible.
- The rainfall outlook for the next 7 days is for below average conditions.

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System-wide overview:

Rainfall last week was negligible District-wide. Based on continuing discussions regarding the status of Lake Okeechobee, the estuaries and predicted drier-than-normal dry season, District staff have developed a transitional pulse release schedule to recommend to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.* If forecasts for a drier than normal dry season are true, some models have the lake reaching 14 feet by May.

Lake Okeechobee — Lake Okeechobee levels continue to drop. Lake level is at 15.69 ft NGVD, down 0.08 ft since last week. The lake is 0.12 ft higher today than it was on this date last year. The gap between this year's and last year's stage levels has been steadily decreasing; however, stage levels continue to be higher than the desired levels for optimum Lake ecological health. The collection of January lake ecological monitoring data will begin next week.

Upper Chain of Lakes/Kissimmee Basin — All lakes in the Upper Kissimmee region are at or below their respective regulation schedules, allowing water managers to reduce flows through the Kissimmee River to Lake Okeechobee. There continues to be water on the restored floodplain and wildlife counts are good. Water managers will slowly reduce the inflows to the restored section to prevent damage.

St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries — Level 1 pulse releases from Lake Okeechobee to both estuaries began on Jan. 1. Salinity data for the past week are temporarily unavailable but should be restored by next week. Declining inflows suggest improving salinity conditions, but conditions remain poor.

Water Conservation Areas — Water depths in the conservation areas continued to decrease throughout the area through managed releases, lack of rainfall, and evapotranspiration losses. WCA-1 water depths declined slightly and remain below regulation schedule. WCA-3A water depths declined slightly, and at 10.44 ft, are below regulation schedule. Continued water releases have dropped water levels in southern WCA-3A to 2.76 ft, which continues to improve conditions for tree islands. Continued declines in water levels will improve conditions for healthy tree growth at the beginning of the growing season. WCA-2A water levels remain above the regulation schedule, while WCA-2B is deeper than normal.

Everglades National Park — Lack of rainfall across Everglades National Park and Florida Bay produced slight declines except at Taylor Slough bridge, where water levels dropped just under 0.3 ft. Downstream from the bridge, the Taylor River mangrove station recorded a very slight decline (0.02 ft). This station is located near the roseate spoonbill study site. The effects of these depths on spoonbill foraging and chick production are being reviewed.

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

* 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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Florida Bay — Salinity remains fairly low across much of Florida Bay and Tarpon Bay at the Shark River Slough outflow. Areas to the west in the north central bay have experienced increasing salinity concentrations this week. This increase may result from bay water being pushed into these shallow basins, coupled with lack of freshwater inflows resulting from low rainfall and low flow. Wider trends are difficult to discern because many of the stations within the bay remain offline.

Other District News and Happenings — During the past week, the District finalized plans for an independent Herbert Hoover dike analysis that will be presented to the District Governing Board on Jan. 11. Bid documents are also being finalized for C-44 and Everglades Acceler8 short-term financing – both are scheduled to be bid in January. District construction staff met with EAA landowners/representatives to finalize the draft plan for dewatering STA-1 W, Cell 5 into EAA lands to the west in advance of construction.