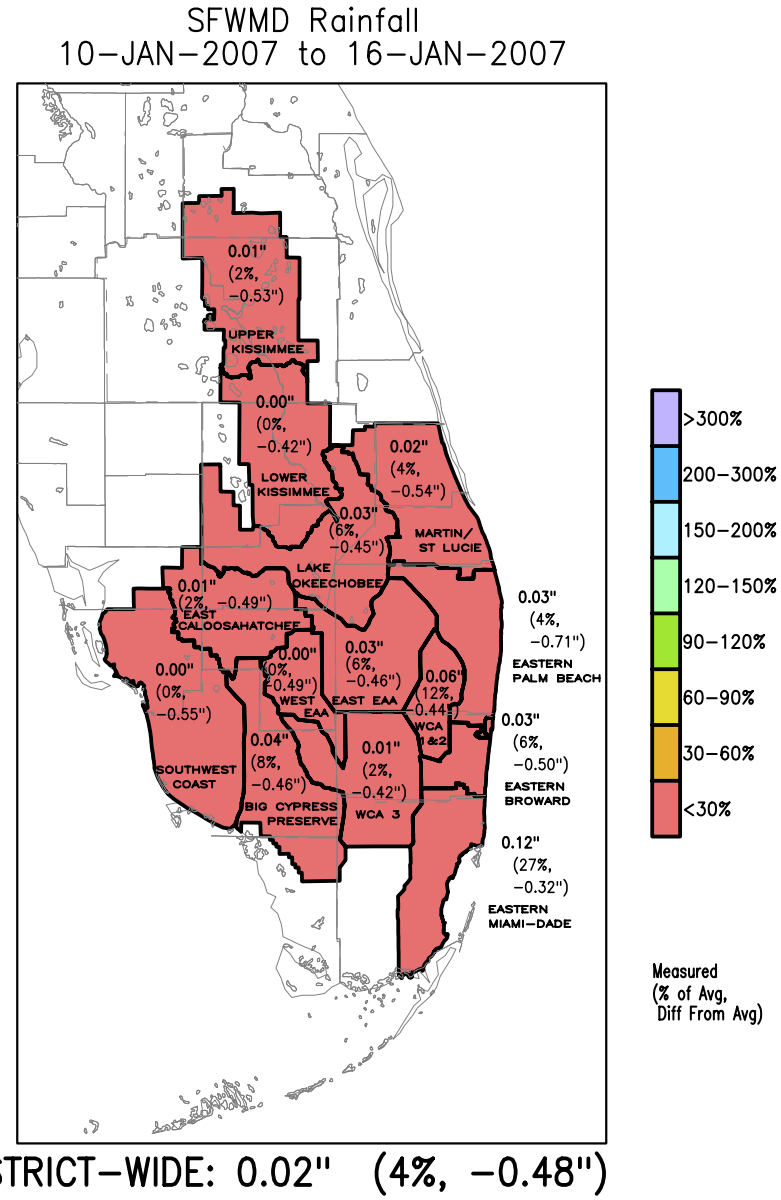
Weekly Update: January 17, 2007

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.



Rainfall overview:

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

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State of the Water Management System

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System-wide overview:
A weakening cold front will move into north central Florida Wednesday and stall. A second push should then bring the front through the District on Saturday with scattered showers mainly on the east coast. The outlook for the next ten days is below average precipitation.

Lake Okeechobee — The lake stage is approximately 11.95 feet NGVD 29 (10.65 feet NAVD 88), and is 0.14 feet lower than it was on this date last week. Surface inflows are 11 cubic feet per second (cfs). Surface outflows are 901 cfs. January submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) surveys found plants at 10 of the 43 sites visited.

Upper Chain of Lakes/Kissimmee Basin — The upper and lower Kissimmee Basins received very little rain during the last seven days. Stages for the upper basin lakes remain below their respective regulation schedules. Water levels within the area of Phase I of Kissimmee River Restoration Project continue to remain fairly stable.

St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries — In the St. Lucie Estuary, no releases occurred at S-80 during the past week. All salinity readings are within the preferred range, and salinity conditions in the estuary are good. The environmental releases to the Caloosahatchee Estuary that began on Dec. 16 continue with a goal of maintaining a discharge of 250 cfs at S-79 from a combination of releases from Lake Okeechobee and runoff from the C-43 Basin. During the past week, discharge at S-79 has averaged 285 cfs with 100 percent supplied by releases from Lake Okeechobee. Salinity conditions in the lower estuary and San Carlos Bay are good.

Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) — Recession rates are excellent for concentrating fish in sloughs, ranging between 0.07 feet and 0.14 feet across the Everglades. Water depths are now approaching levels suitable for wading bird foraging success, with depths ranging between 0.4 feet and 2.35 feet. WCA-1 decreased by 0.09 feet (depth of 1.37 feet), WCA-2A decreased by 0.12 feet (depth of 0.82 feet), WCA-3A decreased by 0.08 feet (depth of 1.33 feet), WCA-3B decreased by 0.06 feet (depth of 1.14 feet) and northeast Shark River Slough decreased by 0.10 feet (depth of 0.97 feet). As has been the case since November, WCA-1 and WCA-3 are still below the regulation schedule, while WCA-2A remains above regulation.

Everglades National Park — Water levels were down across the Park wetlands for the week. In the panhandle, water levels dropped by nearly 0.5 inches for a second week. Whereas last week we saw a large increase (9 inches) in water level at Taylor Slough Bridge, this past week brought a recession of nearly 4.5 inches.

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 — Salinity concentrations continued to be stable across Florida Bay this past week, with less water flow reversals than last week.

** 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 — Coupled with irregular 2006 rain patterns that disproportionately favored southern and southwestern portions of the District, SFWMD meteorologists recorded District-wide rainfall of 40.75 inches for 2006, marking the sixth-driest year on record in South Florida dating back to 1932. The total is nearly a foot, or 22 percent, below the historical average rainfall of 52.25 inches per year District-wide.

All of the District's major basins experienced below average rainfall for the year. Most notably, the Upper Kissimmee Basin, comprised of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes, received a record low of 32.20 inches of rain in 2006, nearly an inch below the previous record of 33.00 inches set in 1961 and nearly 18 inches below the basin's historical average of approximately 50 inches. Similarly, the Martin/St. Lucie Basin, along the District's northeastern border, received 33.70 inches of rain, approximately 61 percent of that basin's historical average and the second-lowest annual rain total on record here dating back to 1915.

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. This, too, is a concern because the lake serves as the region's primary back-up water supply.

Other District News and Happenings —

- The construction of the G-161 Northlake Boulevard Water Control Structure, a component of both the Northern Palm Beach County Comprehensive Water Management Plan and the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), is now complete. Built in cooperation with the City of West Palm Beach and Palm Beach County, the project aims to improve water levels in the Loxahatchee Slough and increase fresh water deliveries to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River during dry periods. The total cost of the construction for G-161 was more than $2 million. More than half of this total was provided through a special appropriation from the State of Florida, with the remainder derived from the District's operating budget.

- The District will hold Water Resource Advisory Commission Issues Workshop meetings on Jan. 23 and 25. The purpose of these meetings will be to discuss the concepts presented in the Broward County Water Preserve Areas (a component of the Acceler8 Program) Basis of Design Report and encourage and provide an opportunity for public involvement. The Basis of Design Report is available for review on the Acceler8 website, www.evergladesnow.org

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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.