

Rainfall overview:

- District-wide rainfall for the past week was 0.30 inches.
- The rainfall outlook for the next seven days is for below average rainfall.

U.S. Drought Monitor:

The [Drought Monitor](#) focuses on broad-scale conditions and identifies general drought areas, labeling droughts by intensity. This week, areas of the District fall into two areas of intensity -- severe and moderate drought.

System-wide overview:

Given no significant forecasted rain events, water managers at the District predict that drought conditions are likely to intensify quickly, particularly in the highly-populated Lower and Upper East Coast Service Areas, which comprise portions of St. Lucie, Martin, Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade and Monroe counties.

The drought and subsequent water shortage of 2007 are the result of persistent low rainfall dating back to 2006, which ranked as the sixth-driest year on record in terms of District-wide rainfall. The trend has continued through the first three months of 2007, as only 2.61 inches of rain has fallen year to date District-wide; this is 37 percent of the historical average for the three-month period ending March 30, 2007. During the month of March, only 0.60 inch of rain has fallen District-wide; this is 21 percent of the historical average for the month. This year's dry season currently ranks as the third driest hydrologic season in recordable Florida history, according to the National Weather Service.

As water demands and consumptive use continue to climb with the increasingly arid conditions, water levels across the District have dropped suddenly and sharply over the past week, exacerbated by high evaporation and transpiration rates and longer periods of wind and sunlight. The water level in Water Conservation Area 1, for example, has dropped by nearly a foot in seven days.

Water levels in Water Conservation Areas 1 and 2 are approaching their floor elevations, the levels at which no additional flows to Palm Beach and Broward Counties would be permitted unless a temporary deviation is secured from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The water level in Water Conservation Area 3 also is expected to continue to drop closer to its floor, despite a recent rainfall reprieve. Residents of the Lower East Coast rely on Water Conservation Areas to replenish the local water supply.

The District Governing Board may have to consider emergency action in the Lower East Coast to ensure adequate supply for residential use as well as to protect surficial aquifers against the threat of saltwater intrusion. Such action may involve staging water levels higher in coastal canals, while allowing western or inland canals to drop.

The water level in Lake Okeechobee, a bellwether measurement of the District's water supply, is approximately four feet below its historical average for this time of year. The District will not be able to use Lake Okeechobee as a back-up water supply source for residents in the Lower East Coast. In addition, lake levels throughout the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes are well below normal, creating possible problems for boaters and potentially impacting the regional ecology, in addition to reducing the regional water supply.

See [Area Water Restrictions](#)

Lake Okeechobee:

Lake Okeechobee continues to decline and is at 10.48 feet NGVD 29 (9.18 feet NAVD 88), 0.15 feet lower since this day last week and 0.70 feet lower than one month ago. As lake levels continue to decline, sampling programs are being scaled back or even suspended because either sites are no longer accessible by boat or boat ramps are no longer usable for launching.

Upper Chain of Lakes/Kissimmee Basin:

The upper Kissimmee Basin received 0.09 inches of rainfall over the last seven days, and the lower basin received 0.16 inches. Lake stages have remained fairly stable over the last week. No releases are being made in the system. Only slight increases in stage (0.03 feet) occurred within the area of Phase I of Kissimmee River Restoration Project following last week's rain.

St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries:

In the St. Lucie Estuary, salinity conditions are good. No releases occurred at S-80 or S-308 over the past week. Salinity conditions are poor in the upper Caloosahatchee Estuary and good in the Lower Estuary and San Carlos Bay. No discharge occurred at S-79 over the past week.

Water Conservation Areas (WCAs):

WCA rainfall ranged from 0.28-1.4 inches. Recession rates were fair, ranging from -0.26 feet to 0.03 feet. Water depths are good to fair for wading bird foraging in much of the Everglades except for northern WCA-3, where water has fallen below the ground surface, increasing the risk of peat fires.

Everglades National Park:

The Park received 1.4 inches of rain last week. Water levels rose between 0.75-4.3 inches in most areas of the Park after Thursday's rainfall except in the panhandle where water levels dropped in response to lower rainfall.

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

Florida Bay:

Salinity concentrations decreased slightly with last week's rainfall and strong southerly winds that prevented bay water from making its way north into the creeks and embayments.

Area Water Restrictions:

With below-average rainfall and drought conditions continuing throughout the region, mandatory water use restrictions went into effect throughout South Florida on March 22.

Eastern Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties and Martin and St. Lucie County Residential "C" Canal Users - Phase I Restrictions

Phase I mandatory water use restrictions went into effect March 22 in eastern Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade and Monroe counties, as well as for St. Lucie and Martin County residents using C-23, C-24 and C-25 canals for irrigation. Phase I water restrictions limit outdoor water use. Phase I restrictions allow lawn watering and car washing three days a week: Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays from 4 a.m. to 8 a.m. for addresses that end in an odd number; Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays from 4 a.m. to 8 a.m. for even-number addresses.

These and other actions are intended to produce a 15 percent reduction in overall demand on our water resources by all uses, including agricultural, industrial, commercial, golf course, landscaping and residential water users. The Phase I restrictions in eastern Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade, Monroe and parts of Martin and St. Lucie counties apply to users who get their water from ALL sources including public utilities, private wells, canals, ponds and lakes, with a few exceptions such as firefighting and public health and safety.

A mandatory cease withdrawal restriction also went into effect on March 22 in the St. Lucie County Agricultural Area, impacting, primarily, permitted agricultural users who draw water directly from the C-23, C-24 and C-25 canals when canal levels drop below 14 feet.

Lake Okeechobee Service Area - Phase II Restrictions

Phase II mandatory water use restrictions went into effect March 22 in areas surrounding Lake Okeechobee, which impacts predominantly agricultural, industrial, commercial water users in the Everglades Agricultural Area, and parts of Hendry, Glades, Okeechobee, Palm Beach and Martin counties; 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.

Agricultural water users in these areas are required to reduce their consumption of surface water by 30 percent. These users have been notified of the specific nature of restrictions pertaining to this order and are encouraged to voluntarily exercise additional water conservation measures when possible.

Residential users in the Lake Okeechobee Service Area are required to limit outdoor irrigation times to two days per week. Residents with odd home addresses will be allowed to water between 4 a.m. and 8 a.m. on Wednesdays and Saturdays, while residents with even home addresses will be allowed to water between 4 a.m. and 8 a.m. on Thursdays and Sundays. Car and boat washing are allowed only during the designated watering days and times.

The Phase II restrictions in the Lake Okeechobee Service Area apply to users who get their water from Lake Okeechobee, public utilities, canals, ponds and lakes. Groundwater sources (wells) are not restricted in the Lake Okeechobee Service Area because this source is not connected to Lake Okeechobee and is not threatened by the water shortage in this area. The use of water for firefighting, safety, sanitation, health, medical and other essential purposes is not restricted.

Residential water use restrictions are mandatory and will be enforced by local government through its law enforcement or zoning and code enforcement agencies. The District enforces the restrictions for consumptive water use permit holders.

In addition to the mandatory water use restrictions where applicable, residents in all areas of the District are encouraged to voluntarily save water both inside and outside the home. For additional information, residents can call the District's toll-free Water Conservation Hotline at (800) 662-8876 or contact their regional South Florida Water Management District Service Center.

Detailed water restriction information, TV and radio public service announcements and other helpful water conservation tips are available at www.sfwmd.gov/consERVE.

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 Niki Spencer at 800-432-2045 or 561-686-8800, ext. 6004.

* 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.