

State of the Water Management System

Severe Drought Edition



Weekly Update

April 18, 2007

**Mission Statement:**

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.gov](http://www.sfwmd.gov)

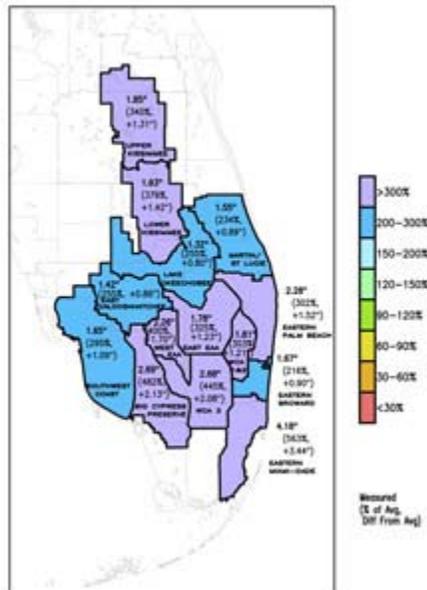
South Florida Water
Management District
www.sfwmd.gov

District News and Happenings

- Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Mike Sole brought together representatives from DEP, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Department of Emergency Management, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the District to form the Drought Working Group. The Working Group will review and update the 2007 State of Florida Drought Action Plan. The 2007 State of Florida Drought Action Plan provides background on the drought situation, discusses the recent history of drought management in the state, describes the current institutional structure for addressing water shortages, and sets out specific steps to respond. It also identifies short-term and medium-term action steps to improve water conservation, manage the current conditions and develop alternative water supplies.
- The District installed the last four of 14 submerged temporary forward pumps, which will be used to draw water out of the lake for water supply needs when levels fall below 10.2 feet. The pumps provide limited ability to move water out of Lake Okeechobee for local irrigation, but they cannot help replenish Lower East Coast water supplies. When the lake drops to this level, it becomes difficult to deliver water to downstream users because gravity can no longer effectively move enough water through existing control structures.
- To keep drinking water flowing in Pahokee, District staff repaired pumps that were installed in Lake Okeechobee in 2001. Dry weather dropped lake levels low enough that the Pahokee town utility could have soon lost the ability to draw enough water needed to provide residents with water for drinking and irrigation. The District pumps have not been used since the last drought, but testing and maintenance last week showed they could be reactivated to draw water from deeper within Lake Okeechobee.

System-Wide Overview

Click map for larger image



Rainfall overview:

- District-wide rainfall for the past week was 2.03 inches.
- The rainfall outlook for the next seven days is for below average rainfall.

System-wide overview:

Water level conditions remained somewhat stable over the past week throughout the District in response to an approximate 2-inch rainfall event throughout much of the area. Wells in the Upper East Coast continue to remain near low levels for their periods of record. High pressure over the District is bringing cool and dry conditions. Breezy northeast winds will bring isolated light showers to the east on Saturday.

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.

Lake Okeechobee:

Lake Okeechobee continues to decline and is at 9.91 feet NGVD 29 (8.61 feet NAVD 88), 0.18 feet lower since this day last week. Rainfall over the past week had minimal impacts on lake levels. No algal blooms were observed during this month's sampling efforts. The low lake levels are creating abundant shorebird habitat. During a survey of the northwest part of Lake Okeechobee last week, more than 10,000 shorebirds, mostly Least Sandpipers, were counted. As lake levels continue to decline, sampling programs are being scaled back or even suspended because 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 1.85 inches of rain over the last seven days, and the lower basin received 1.93 inches. Lake stages have remained fairly stable over the last week, despite receiving rain. Snail kites continue to nest on Lake Tohopekaliga. Releases from S-63 started last week to begin lowering Lake Gentry according to the regulation schedule. No other releases are being made. Concentration of dissolved oxygen in the Phase I restored river channel has been above thresholds of concern. During the last week, the water stage remained stable within the area of Phase I of Kissimmee River Restoration Project.

St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries:

In the St. Lucie Estuary, no releases occurred at S-80 over the past week. There

have been no discharges from C-44, C-23 or C-24 since September-October 2006. Average salinities at the Roosevelt Bridge exceed the upper limit of the preferred range. Salinity conditions remain conducive for recovery of seagrasses near the St. Lucie Inlet. In the Caloosahatchee Estuary, no discharge occurred at S-79 over the past week. Salinity conditions are poor in the upper Caloosahatchee Estuary. Salinity conditions are good for seagrasses in the lower estuary and San Carlos Bay.

Water Conservation Areas (WCAs):

The WCAs received between 2.16-2.78 inches of rain. Due to the rain, a significant reversal has occurred everywhere except in WCA-2B. Despite these high water level increases, the northern regions of WCA-3A remains below ground, while the southern end of WCA-3A has 1.4 feet of surface water. Reversals bode ill for wading bird foraging and nesting success. District surveys of the super colony forming in WCA-1 indicate that foraging declined considerably along the eastern edge of the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge immediately after last week's rain event. There was little change in nesting colonies over the last week, with most colonies in WCA-3A now having substantial numbers of White Ibis chicks.

Everglades National Park:

The Park received 3.26 inches of rain. Water levels increased between 4.3-18.6 inches.

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 in Florida Bay decreased this week.

Area Water Restrictions:



[Click map for larger image](#)

Everglades Agricultural Area

Modified Phase Three or extreme water shortage conditions have been declared for Everglades Agricultural Area farmers who rely on Lake Okeechobee for irrigation water. This requires a 45 percent cutback in their weekly allocations.

Lake Okeechobee Service Area

(Includes portions of Hendry, Glades, Lee, Okeechobee, Palm Beach, Martin counties) Phase Two restrictions remain in place for other Lake Okeechobee Service Area water users. This require a 30 percent reduction for agricultural and

other District permitted users and limits lawn watering to no more than two days a week for residents and businesses using surface water sources.

Lower East Coast

(Includes eastern Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach and Monroe counties, as well as residents and business in Martin County served by the Tequesta Water Utility) Phase Two restrictions require a 30 percent reduction for agricultural and other District permitted users and limits lawn watering to no more than two days a week for residents and businesses using surface water sources. These restrictions apply to all traditional surface and groundwater sources - including water from public utilities, private wells, lakes, canals and ponds.

Lower West Coast

(Includes Hendry, Glades, Lee and Collier counties and a portion of Charlotte County) Phase Two restrictions require a 30 percent reduction for agricultural and other District permitted users and limits lawn watering to no more than two days a week for residents and businesses using surface water sources. These restrictions apply to all traditional surface and groundwater sources - including water from public utilities, private wells, lakes, canals and ponds.

Upper East Coast

(Includes Martin and St. Lucie counties) Phase 1 or moderate restrictions are now in effect for residents and businesses in Martin and St. Lucie counties, except those as residents and business in Martin County served by the Tequesta Water Utility who are under Phase Two restrictions. Lawn watering is allowed up to three-days-a-week and, again, these restrictions apply to all traditional surface and groundwater sources.

Agricultural users in the Lake Istokpoga area and in St. Lucie and Martin counties continue to have limits on withdrawals from area canals.

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.*