

Weekly Update: May 10, 2006



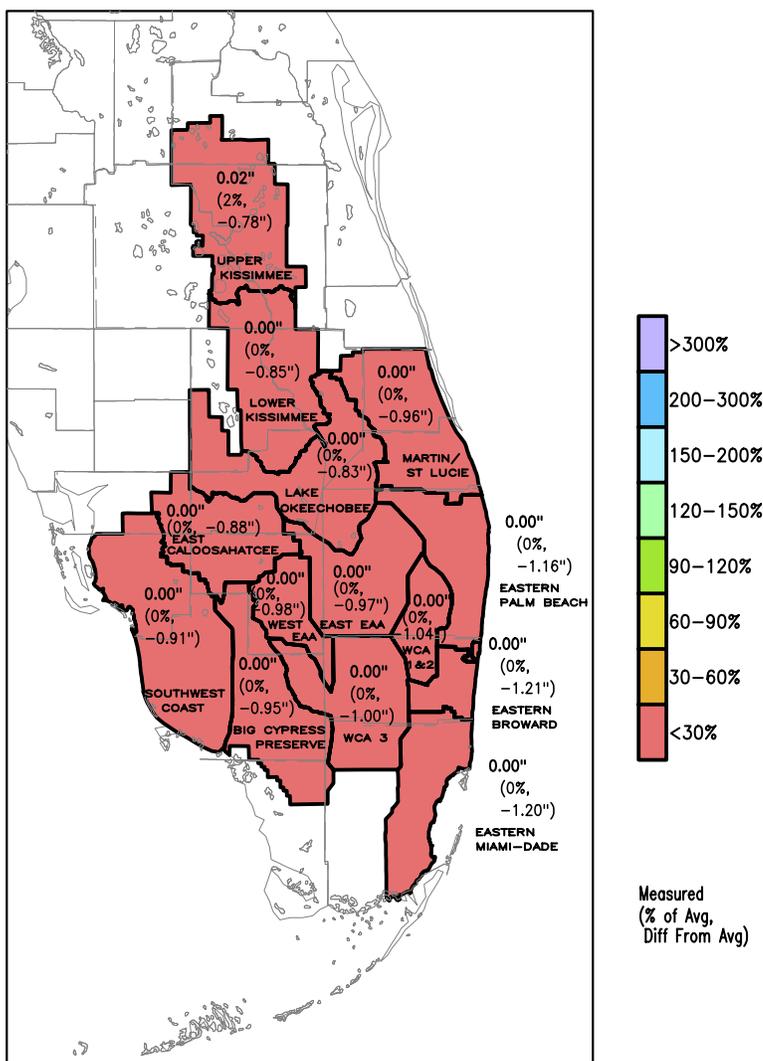
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FACTs

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
03-MAY-2006 to 09-MAY-2006



DISTRICT-WIDE: 0.00" (0%, -0.95")

GRADS: COLA/IGES

2006-05-10-13:02

Rainfall overview:

- District-wide rainfall for the past week was zero inches.
- The rainfall outlook for the next seven days is for average rainfall.
- The Florida Keys received 3.0 inches of rainfall, which is 24 percent of normal, from November 2, 2005 through May 1, 2006.



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System-wide overview:

This past week, no rain was received District-wide. Dry conditions are expected this Friday and Saturday. Average rainfall is anticipated over the next 10-15 days.

Lake Okeechobee — The Lake stage is approximately 13.12 feet NGVD 29 (11.82 feet NAVD 88), down 0.29 feet since this day last week and 1.57 feet lower than on this date last year.* Preliminary results for the May sampling of northern submerged aquatic vegetation sites found sparse Hydrilla at the same site where plants were found last month. Low water clarity measurements from this month's sampling may be partially due to the past weeks of windy weather, so a repeat sampling is planned during the next extended period of calm weather. Bulrush appears to be recovering, although stem densities are still half of what they were last June. Overall, mean total suspended solids and total phosphorus values have declined substantially since January 2006 suggesting a gradual improvement in Lake Okeechobee water quality.

Upper Chain of Lakes/Kissimmee Basin — In the last seven days, the upper basin received no rainfall resulting in a 30-day total of 1.37 inches, which is 53 percent of normal. The lower basin received no rainfall during this same period, which resulted in a 30-day total of 0.65 inches or 26 percent of normal. The spring recession for the upper basin lakes continues. Discharges continued from East Lake Tohopekaliga at S-59 and from Lake Tohopekaliga at S-61. Stage recession rates were 0.04 feet/day in East Lake Tohopekaliga and 0.03 feet/day in Lake Tohopekaliga and were very close to desirable rate of 0.03 ft/d for snail kite nesting. Snail kite nesting continues on Lake Tohopekaliga. Concentration of dissolved oxygen remains well above thresholds of concern, which is good for aquatic organisms.

St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries — Salinity in the St. Lucie Estuary increased during the last week, especially at the US-1 site, though salinities at the US-1 and A1A monitoring sites continue to be within the preferred range. Overall, salinity conditions in the St. Lucie Estuary remain good and supportive of oyster recruitment. There has been no discharge from Lake Okeechobee through S-80 during the past two weeks.

In the Caloosahatchee Estuary, a modified, 1/2 pulse release at S-79 ended on May 6 and another immediately started. Tape grass beds in the upper estuary between Ft. Myers and the I-75 Bridge have experienced surface weekly average salinities well within established tolerance limits. Salinity conditions in the Caloosahatchee Estuary are good, supportive of key indicator species, fish recruitment, and within minimum flows and levels requirements, even though local conditions have been very dry. Observations at upstream tape grass locations indicate population densities are still below desired levels, but showing signs of improvement. Salinity conditions in the important oyster reefs upstream of Shell Point are in the preferred range, supportive of growth and recruitment. A spot field check in Iona Cove recently found live clutches of oysters prevalent. Additional recent field sampling found very good water clarity downstream, indicative of improved water quality conditions in the lower estuary and San Carlos Bay that are needed for improving sea grass coverage during this important spring growing season.

* 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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Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) — Recession rates were too high for a second week in a row for most of the Everglades. Average weekly recession rates: Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge was -0.19 feet (depth of .48 feet); WCA-2A was -0.24 feet (depth of -0.55 feet; very dry condition), WCA-2B was -0.3 feet (1.48 feet); northern region of WCA-3A was -0.22 feet (depth of 0.2 feet); southern region of WCA-3A was -0.15 feet (depth of 1.16 feet); WCA-3B was -0.21 feet (depth of 0.58 feet); North East Shark River Slough was a very high -0.41 feet, creating a depth of -0.06 feet. These numbers suggest that wading birds should now be foraging in the central Everglades and WCA-3B. If water levels continue to drop at this rapid rate for the next few weeks, then late breeding wading birds will have to use WCA-2B for foraging and successful fledging of young. Despite these dry conditions, wading bird nest activity continues to look promising. All the WCAs are below regulation.

Everglades National Park — No rainfall was recorded in the Park during the past week, and as a result, water levels declined throughout the marsh. The weekly recession was lowest in Shark River Slough at approximately 1 inch, creating a depth of 0.78 feet, while in the panhandle, water levels were down by nearly 1.5 inches and are now below the surface (-0.09 feet). Typical for this area, the drop in stage was most dramatic at Taylor Stage Bridge (down 3.6 inches for the week), where water levels are now 2.5 feet below the surface.

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 — Virtually no rain fell in Florida Bay during the past week, and salinity increased at all Florida Bay stations. Stage readings in the ponds suggest this increased salinity has been fueled by bay water pushing into these areas from the south. The most dramatic increases in salinity this week were to the west in the shallow basin of Terrapin Bay. Salinity is also on the rise in the Shark River Slough outflow at Tarpon Bay.

Keetch-Byram drought index — This is used by the Florida Division of Forestry to indicate soil dryness. The scale ranges from zero (no moisture deficit) to 800, which means moisture is not found for eight inches below the soil. It is based on daily rainfall and temperature measurements, and increases for each day without rainfall. High values of the KBDI are an indication that conditions are favorable for the occurrence and spread of wildfires. The index can be viewed at http://www.fl-dof.com/fire_weather/KBDI/. The May 9 KBDI average for the District's 16 counties is 604 -- an increase of 15 points since last week -- with a minimum of 14 in Monroe County and a maximum of 754 in Palm Beach County.

Other District News and Happenings —

At this month's two-day Governing Board meeting:

- Billy Causey, Superintendent of Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (and Acting Regional Superintendent of the Southeast Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Region), presented findings on "Red Tide Blooms on Florida's West Coast." His main points were:
 - There are local and regional causes of red tide blooms on the southwest coast of Florida.
 - Water quality on the southwest coast and the Keys is affected by local and regional inputs. Local sources such as wastewater and regional inputs from as far away as the Mississippi River and the Caribbean (via the Loop Current) contribute to water quality conditions on the southwest coast and the Keys.
 - Red tide events are not new; they have been documented for over 200 years.
 - The influx of freshwater from any source into a coastal or marine area can cause a red tide bloom.

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- Les Bromwell of BCI Engineers presented the report regarding the Herbert Hoover Dike. This third-party report indicated issues regarding the dike's integrity particularly at high water stages and during storm events. The U.S. Army Corps provided a response indicating what work is currently underway and budgeted and planned for the future.
- The Governing Board held the public hearing on adoption of the Small Business Enterprise Rule at the May Governing Board meeting in Fort Pierce and adopted the rule. Criteria for what constitutes a small business will no longer include the number of employees, and dollar limitations for construction would be \$13 million, \$6 million for engineering and \$5 million for commodities.
- A land acquisition for CERP Northern Palm Beach County Project – Part One for two sections of land totaling 1,282.61 acres was approved. The purchase is 18 percent over appraised value for a total of \$37,836,995, payable in three equal installments with no interest accruing. The parcel is part of a plan to provide hydrologic connections between the Corbett Wildlife Management Area, Pal Mar and the northwest fork of the Loxahatchee River.

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.