

Weekly Update: July 19, 2006

State of the Water Management System

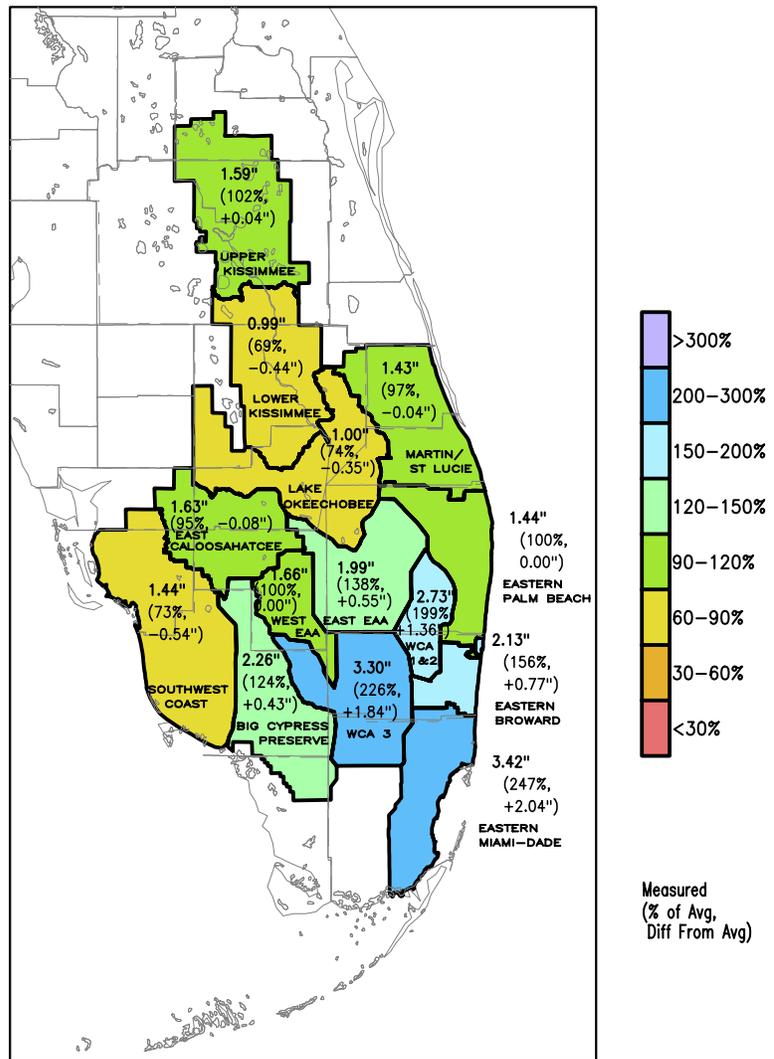
To underscore our commitment to keep you informed, we will send this update weekly. We encourage you to share this water resources information with your constituents.



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.

SFWM District Rainfall
12-JUL-2006 to 18-JUL-2006



DISTRICT-WIDE: 1.82" (118%, +0.28")

GRADS: COLA/IGES

2006-07-18-15:02

Rainfall overview:

- District-wide rainfall for the past week was less than 2 inches.
- The rainfall outlook for the next seven days is for average rainfall.



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System-wide overview:

District-wide rainfall was 1.82 inches. As of July 17, with two weeks left in the month, July's rainfall total was 4.51 inches and the year-to-date (YTD) total was 18.18 inches. There have been only five other years back since 1932 when YTD rainfall has been less than 22.5 inches at the end of July, and all five times annual rainfall ended up between 39.5 and 42.5 inches (10-12 inches below normal), which were some of the driest totals on record. The three cases when YTD totals at the end of July ended up between 22.5 and 23 inches went on to produce annual rainfall that was around 48 inches.

Lake Okeechobee — The Lake stage is approximately 12.22 feet NGVD 29 (10.92 feet NAVD 88), up 0.05 feet since this day last week and 4.41 feet lower than on this date last year.* While no plants were found on the regular submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) transect sites last week, extensive patches of Chara (shrimp grass) were noted along the western shore of the lake. The appearance of Chara, the typical pioneer SAV species in Lake Okeechobee, in this shallow region is encouraging. Water clarity measurements at the transect sites continue to improve in some locations. The lake remains at what is considered to be the ideal stage for regeneration of the SAV community.

Upper Chain of Lakes/Kissimmee Basin — In the last seven days, the Kissimmee upper basin received 1.01 inches to bring the 30-day total to 6.09 inches, which is 87% of the long-term average. The lower basin received 0.93 inches to bring the 30-day total to 6.03 inches, which is 92% of the long-term average. Stage has been increasing in all of the upper basin lakes except Lakes Cypress, Hatchineha and Kissimmee. In some of the smaller lakes, stage is approaching the regulation schedule, but most lakes are still below regulation schedule. At least one active snail kite nest remains on Lake Tohopekaliga. Discharges at S-65 were approximately 450 cubic feet per second, and concentration of dissolved oxygen in the restored river channel remains well above thresholds of concern.

St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries — Discharge at structure S-80 from the St. Lucie Canal (C-44) averaged 311 cubic feet per second during the past week, with 100% accounted for by runoff from the C-44 Basin. The Florida Oceanographic Society reports that water clarity and dissolved oxygen in the St. Lucie Estuary are fair to good. Discharge at S-79 to the Caloosahatchee Estuary averaged 1,287 cubic feet per second over the past week. The 30-day average discharge at S-79 is 812 cubic feet per second and within the preferred range. Tape grass beds in the upper estuary between the I-75 Bridge and Ft. Myers have experienced average salinities within the preferred range. Salinity conditions in both estuaries are good.

Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) — Last week's total rainfall averaged 2 inches in WCA-1, 1.6 inches in WCA-2A, 3.4 inches in WCA-2B, 3.3 inches in WCA-3A, and 3.5 inches in WCA-3B. Water depths significantly increased across the Everglades: WCA-1 increased by 0.31 feet and now has an average depth of 1.04 feet; WCA-2B increased by more than 1.17 feet, the most of any region, and depth is now 1.4 feet; WCA-2A increased by 0.44 feet for an average depth of 0.86 feet; WCA-3A increased by an average of 1.13 feet; and the rest of the system, including northeast Shark River Slough has more than 1 foot of water and is no longer considered good for wading bird foraging. WCA-1 and 2 are now above regulation, while WCA-3 is at regulation.

* *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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Everglades National Park — Most areas of the Park received 3-5 inches of rain, with some areas receiving much higher accumulations (5-10 inches for the week). The rainfall average for the Park was 4.1 inches. There is a clear trend for increasing stage in the Park wetlands in response to rainfall. At the Taylor Slough Bridge there was nearly a 6-inch increase in water level over a 4-day period. The increase measured in the panhandle was nearly 3 inches. In terms of water deliveries to Taylor Slough and to the panhandle, the gates at S-18C are open and the pumps at S-332B and D are on. The S-12 structures that allow movement of water from WCA-3 into Shark River Slough remain closed.

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 in Florida Bay dropped dramatically at all stations. The salinity decline at Trout Creek suggests that flow is moving through this major bay tributary. In the Shark River Slough outflow at Tarpon Bay, salinity dropped slowly for the week and was at near freshwater concentrations as of Monday.

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 eight inches of water has been depleted from 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://flame.fldof.com/fire_weather/KBDI/index.html. The July 18 KBDI average for the District's 16 counties is 304 (an increase of 28 points), with a minimum of 1 in Collier and Monroe counties and a maximum of 700 in Glades County.

Other District News and Happenings —

- The Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir groundbreaking is scheduled for Wednesday, August 2 at 9:30 a.m. at the G-370 Structure. The EAA Reservoir will hold approximately 190,000 acre-feet, or 62 billion gallons, of water – providing a new option for redirecting and storing releases from Lake Okeechobee, reducing harmful discharges to coastal estuaries and allowing the lake to be maintained at lower levels behind the Herbert Hoover Dike. The reservoir will also capture EAA runoff and ultimately, help improve the quality, timing and distribution of flows to the Everglades.
- Tours of the completed Acceler8 C-43 West Storage Reservoir Project Test Cells will be offered for media, local governments, neighbors and communities on July 28 from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. RSVP to Rhea Clark at (800) 248-1201 ext. 772 or rclark@sfwmd.gov. The C-43 test cells are providing valuable data for final design of the Acceler8 C-43 West Storage Reservoir project, which consists of an above-ground reservoir located just south of the Townsend Canal and Caloosahatchee River junction that will capture and store basin stormwater runoff and regulatory water releases from Lake Okeechobee, reducing the number and volume of harmful discharges to the coastal estuaries. The project is a component of a larger restoration project for the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary.
- The District's 2006-2016 Strategic Plan is available at www.sfwmd.gov. The 2006-2016 Strategic Plan, with the FY 2006 Work Plan, together create a road map for District projects, programs and spending.

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.