

Weekly Update: July 20, 2005



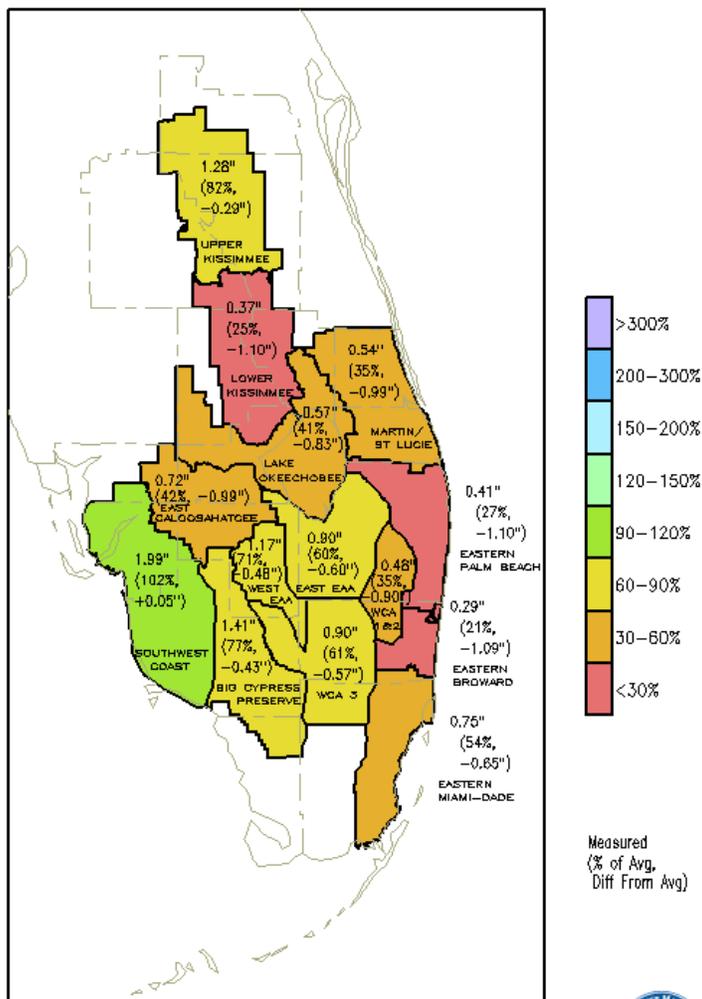
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**FACTs**

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.*

SFWMD Rainfall  
12-JUL-2005 to 18-JUL-2005



DISTRICT-WIDE: 0.94" (60%, -0.64")

GRADS: COLA/ICES



### Rainfall overview:

- District-wide rainfall for the last week averaged less than 1"
- Many areas of the District received below average rainfall.
- Monthly rainfall to-date for July is 4.20", which is about normal.
- Forecast for the wet season is still for above average rainfall.

(more)



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## State of the Water Management System

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### System-wide overview:

The entire system remains saturated. Maximum releases to the ocean are being made from coastal structures. The long-term forecast calls for average to above average rainfall for the District.

**Lake Okeechobee** — Lake level has been hovering around 16.62 ft NGVD for several days. This is up 0.08 ft since last week and is at an all-time high for this time of year. The level seems to be leveling off following several days of lighter rain and high evapotranspiration.

Large releases continue from the lake, per the temporary deviation from the regulation schedule issued by the Corps of Engineers. With the prospect of receding inflows from the Kissimmee River over the next two weeks, a downward trend in the lake level may start next week, depending on rainfall. Preemptive releases covered under the temporary deviation are scheduled to continue until the lake level reaches 16.25 ft and has a downward trend.

*Note: SFWMD water managers and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers work together to manage the lake. 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.*

Windy conditions on the lake have caused the algal blooms, which had appeared over the last two weeks, to dissipate. Light penetration, essential for plant recovery, has increased substantially in the southern reaches of the lake but remains low in the western and northern near-shore zones. Plant densities continue to be sparse. Strategic mapping for biomass in the lake will begin soon, with official plant counts to be released in August.

**Upper Chain of Lakes/Kissimmee Basin** –In the Upper Kissimmee basin, lake stages have been dropping but are still above regulation schedule. Releases from Lake Kissimmee have been reduced from 10,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 6500 cfs in accordance with the regulation schedule. Further reductions are anticipated, which will help in the effort to lower Lake Okeechobee levels.

**St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries** –Outflows through both estuaries are high, and the health of the estuaries is poor. Salinity is low and is being monitored carefully. About half of the freshwater flow into the Caloosahatchee is from basin runoff. A smaller but still significant percentage of the inflow to the St. Lucie is from basin runoff, as rain this past week has been light. A common blue-green algae (*Microcystis aeruginosa*) is present in the St. Lucie estuary.

**Water Conservation Areas** – Levels in Water Conservation Areas 2B and 3A are more than three feet higher than this time last year. On July 18, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission closed WCAs 2B and 3 to the public due to high water levels. Deer and other animals are forced to move onto levees and tree islands for food and shelter. The District has suspended all levee mowing activities in the WCAs.

## State of the Water Management System

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**Everglades National Park** – Water levels are deep for this time of year but are not excessive. Shark River Slough received about 4” of rain from Hurricane Dennis. Water depths in the slough are deep (up to 2 ft), but well below levels that would threaten natural resources due to flooding.

*Note: Rainfall information in the park is based on radar estimates, not rain gauge data. As a result, the map on page one does not always include rainfall information for the park.*

**Florida Bay** – The bay received 2-3” of rain from Hurricane Dennis. It is expected that salinity in the bay will continue to decline as high water levels in the Everglades makes its way southward.



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