



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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Water Shortage Continues Despite Recent Rainfall *Declining Lake Okeechobee level requires further reduction in withdrawals*

Lake Okeechobee Watch



Today	Last week	Last month	Last year	Historic Average
10.65 (feet)	10.82	11.56	14.92	13.36

West Palm Beach, FL – In response to persistent drought conditions and a rapid decline in Lake Okeechobee’s water level, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board today approved a water shortage order that continues to protect South Florida’s limited water supply.

The order is Modified Phase III restrictions for permitted users in the Lake Okeechobee Service Area (LOSA), which includes portions of Okeechobee, Glades, Palm Beach, Lee, Hendry, Martin and St. Lucie counties. The restrictions require a 45-percent reduction in irrigation water for agriculture, nursery and other users drawn from Lake Okeechobee – or surface waters hydraulically connected to the lake.

The reduction would take effect when Lake Okeechobee falls below 10.5 feet NGVD. As of May 12, Lake Okeechobee was at 10.65 feet NGVD – more than 2.7 feet below its historic average for the date and more than four feet below last year’s level. The lake level often drops rapidly in May due to warm temperatures and dry-season evapotranspiration.

“With these seven months of below-normal rainfall, it’s necessary to take the additional precautions to protect the water supply,” said SFWMD Interim Executive Director

Tommy Strowd. “Efforts to conserve now are critical to extend supplies that residents and the environment depend on.”

The U.S. Drought Monitor shows a large area of South Florida from northern Miami-Dade County to the Treasure Coast is experiencing extreme drought conditions. Persistent rainfall in the upcoming wet season will be needed to make up for a regional rainfall deficit that has grown to 8.58 inches since the beginning of October. Meteorologists are predicting that dry conditions will extend into the beginning of the wet season.

A burn ban remains in place on SFWMD public lands to protect lives, property and the environment from the threat of wildfires. The ban means fires in grills, fireplaces or fire rings are not permitted.

The SFWMD is closely monitoring water levels and is urging residents and businesses to conserve their water use and continue to closely follow two-day-a-week landscape irrigation restrictions.

Water Shortage Orders:

- [Two-Day Landscape Irrigation and Golf Course Order](#)
- [Broward and Palm Beach Order](#)
- [Bypass Structure Order](#)
- [South Dade Order](#)



More information is available at:

- [SFWMD Weather/Rainfall Data](#)
- [National Weather Service Dry Season Forecast](#)
- [Climate Prediction Center Precipitation Forecast](#)

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About the South Florida Water Management District

The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state – 16 counties from Orlando to the Keys. It is the oldest and largest of the state’s five water management districts. The agency mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply. A key initiative is cleanup and restoration of the Everglades.