

Lake Okeechobee Operations

FYi

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers manages Lake Okeechobee water levels with the goal of balancing flood control, public safety, navigation, water supply and ecological health. The Corps bases operational decisions — whether to retain or release water in the 730-square-mile lake to manage its water level — on its regulation schedule and the best available science and data provided by its staff and a variety of partners, including the South Florida Water Management District.

Goals for Lake Management

- Providing flood protection for 8.1 million residents
- Maintaining water supply for residents, businesses, agriculture and the environment
- Sustaining seagrasses and aquatic vegetation that serve as critical habitat for fish, shellfish, birds and mammals
- Balancing salinity levels in the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries that provide a healthy ecosystem for spawning fish and invertebrates
- Protect groundwater wells from saltwater intrusion
- Fostering foraging and nesting success for wading birds and protecting endangered, threatened and native species such as the Everglade snail kite and the wood stork



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Responsibilities

- Making ultimate decision to retain or release water
- Managing the lake level throughout the year
- Adhering to the Lake Okeechobee regulation schedule
- Making releases to the coastal estuaries and to the water conservation areas to keep lake levels within the desired range
- Monitoring the upper basin north of Lake Okeechobee, lake inflows and the integrity of the Herbert Hoover Dike to protect local communities

SFWMD Science and Engineering Role

- Providing expertise and data for assessing ecological health of Lake Okeechobee, the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries, the water conservation areas and surrounding ecosystems
- Supplying rainfall forecasts and climate outlooks from staff meteorologists and a staff climatologist, along with analysis of rainfall data from an expansive rain gauge network
- Providing knowledge exchange between District scientists and water managers at the Corps
- Protecting the water supply that more than 6 million people rely on from Lake Okeechobee under the authority of the State of Florida, through the District, by maintaining regional water levels



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