

MEMORANDUM

TO: Laureen Borocharner, Chief, Engineering Division (USACE)
FROM: John Mitnik, Chief District Engineer (SFWMD)
Akin Owosina, Chief, Hydrology & Hydraulics Bureau (SFWMD)
DATE: May 2, 2019
SUBJECT: Operational Position Statement for April 30, 2019 to May 6, 2019

This Position Statement is for the one-week period from April 30, 2019 to May 6, 2019. On April 29, the Lake Okeechobee stage was 11.28 feet NGVD, which places it within the Beneficial Use Sub-band of the 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS). The Lake stage decreased by 0.22 feet during the preceding 7 days.

District April rainfall was below-average (77%). District rainfall forecast (issued April 30) predicts above-average rainfall for this week and for the following week.

Precipitation Outlook: The CPC precipitation outlook for May and the 3-month window of May-Jul is for slightly increased chances (37%) of above-normal rainfall for south Florida. All periods starting with the Jun-Aug 2019 window show equal chances of above-normal, normal, or below-normal rainfall.

2008 LORS Release Guidance (Part C): With Lake Okeechobee stage within Beneficial Use Sub-band, Part C of the 2008 LORS does not suggest releases to the WCAs to manage lake stages.

Over the 7-day period from April 22, 2019 to April 28, 2019, no Lake Okeechobee regulatory releases were sent south to the STAs or to the Lake Worth Lagoon through the C-51 canal. Stage in WCA-1 is below regulation schedule. Stage in WCA-2A is below regulation schedule. WCA-3A stage is below Zone E1 of the regulation schedule. For the coming operational period, the USACE is utilizing Additional Operation Flexibility (AOF) within LORS2008 Water Control Plan as documented in the February 22, 2019 Memorandum For the Record (MFR). **For the coming operational period, the USACE is directing the District to send no Lake Okeechobee regulatory releases south or to the Lake Worth Lagoon through the C-51 canal.**

2008 LORS Release Guidance (Part D): With Lake Okeechobee stage in the Beneficial Use Sub-band, Part D of the 2008 LORS does not suggest releases to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries to manage lake stages.

With Lake Okeechobee stages falling below 11.3 NGVD, the majority of the lake littoral zone marshes are dry. Total discharge to the St. Lucie Estuary averaged approximately 100 cfs over the past week with no releases from Lake Okeechobee. The 7-day average salinity at the US1 Bridge is in the good range for adult oysters. Total inflow to the Caloosahatchee Estuary averaged approximately 1,050 cfs over the past week with about 730 cfs (70%) coming from Lake Okeechobee. Salinity conditions between Val I-75 and Ft. Myers remain good for tape grass. Salinity conditions are in the good range for adult oysters at Shell Point and Cape Coral.

The District, in coordination with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), has considered the application of the SFWMD's Lake Okeechobee Adaptive Protocols (AP) this week since the lake stage is in the Beneficial Use Sub-band and above the Lake Okeechobee Water Shortage Management zone. Given that the estuary does not need water, the AP recommendation is for "No S-77 releases to the Caloosahatchee Estuary unless the Governing Board recommends otherwise". The District recognizes the USACE's responsibility to control lake stages. At this time, the District recommends that the USACE follow LORS 2008, using its operational flexibility to continue beneficial flows from S-79 to maintain a favorable salinity gradient in the Caloosahatchee estuary but with some incremental reduction in releases at S-77 to support Lake Okeechobee ecosystem recovery. Furthermore, the District recommends that releases be reevaluated on a weekly basis in order to increase flexibility of decision making based on current conditions.