

MEMORANDUM

TO: Laureen Borocharner, Chief, Engineering Division (USACE)
FROM: John Mitnik, Chief District Engineer (SFWMD)
Akin Owosina, Chief, Hydrology & Hydraulics Bureau (SFWMD)
DATE: August 22, 2019
SUBJECT: Operational Position Statement for August 20, 2019 to August 26, 2019

This Position Statement is for the one-week period from August 20, 2019 to August 26, 2019. On August 19, Lake Okeechobee stage was 12.99 feet NGVD, which places it within the Base Flow Sub-band of the 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS). Lake stage increased by 0.69 feet during the preceding 7 days.

District August rainfall to date is above-average (143% of normal). District rainfall forecast (issued August 20) predicts below-average rainfall for this 7-day period and for the following week.

Precipitation Outlook: The most recent south Florida CPC precipitation outlooks for September and for the 3-month windows of Sep-Nov and Oct-Dec call for increased chances (45%) of above normal rainfall. The outlooks for all the 3-month windows starting November 2019 to the 2020 wet season are for equal chances of above-normal, normal, or below-normal rainfall for south Florida.

2008 LORS Release Guidance (Part C): With Lake Okeechobee stage within the Base Flow Sub-band, the Tributary Hydrologic Conditions in the Very Wet category and the Multi-Seasonal Lake Okeechobee Net Inflow Outlook in the Wet classification, Part C of the 2008 LORS suggests "Up to Maximum Practicable Releases to the WCAs if Desirable or with Minimum Everglades Impact".

Over the 7-day period from August 12 to August 19, 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 above regulation schedule. Stage in WCA-2A is above regulation schedule. WCA-3A stage is in Zone D of the regulation schedule. For the coming operational period, the USACE is recommending the SFWMD send maximum practicable Lake Okeechobee regulatory releases south to WCA-1. Given that WCA-3A is above schedule, the District recommends that the USACE increase to target canal stage in the L-29 canal to 8.5 feet NGVD in an effort to increase capacity in the southern end of the system and facilitate Lake Okeechobee regulatory releases south to the Everglades.

2008 LORS Release Guidance (Part D): With Lake Okeechobee stage in the Base Flow Sub-band, Part D of the 2008 LORS suggests "S-79 Up to 450cfs and S-80 Up to 200 cfs".

Total discharge to the St. Lucie Estuary averaged approximately 2,550 cfs over the past week with no releases from Lake Okeechobee. The 7-day average salinity at the US1 Bridge is in the fair range for adult oysters. Total inflow to the Caloosahatchee Estuary averaged approximately 9,400 cfs over the past week with no releases coming from Lake Okeechobee. Salinity conditions between Val I-75 and Ft. Myers remain good for tape grass. Salinities are in the good range for adult eastern oysters at Shell Point and Sanibel locations, and in the poor range for Cape Coral.

The District, in coordination with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), has considered the system conditions this week. Given that the lake stage is in the Base Flow Sub-band, and the above average rainfall to date, the Estuary does not need water. Therefore, the District recommends USACE not implement any regulatory releases from the lake to the estuaries, manage local basin runoff to support healthy estuarine conditions in the Caloosahatchee estuary, and that releases be reevaluated on a weekly basis in order to increase flexibility of decision making based on current conditions. Furthermore, the District recommends USACE look to manage Lake Okeechobee water levels with consideration to the upcoming dry season so as to preserve continued dry season flows to the Caloosahatchee estuary and the southern Everglades.