

MEMORANDUM

TO: Luis Alejandro, Chief, Water Management Section (USACE)

FROM: John Mitnik, Chief District Engineer (SFWMD)
Akin Owosina, Chief, Hydrology & Hydraulics Bureau (SFWMD)

DATE: February 22, 2018

SUBJECT: Operational Position Statement for February 20, 2018 to February 26, 2018

This Position Statement is for the one-week period from February 20, 2018 to February 26, 2018. On February 19, 2018, Lake Okeechobee stage was 15.08 feet NGVD, in the Low Sub-band. Lake stage decreased by 0.11 feet during the preceding 7 days.

District wide rainfall to date for the month of February is well below average (34% of normal). District forecast (issued February 20) predicts below-average rainfall for the two coming weeks.

Precipitation Outlook: The most recent Climate Prediction Center (CPC) precipitation outlook indicates increased chances of below-normal rainfall (~45%) for the District for the month of March, and the 3-month windows of March-May, and April-June. The forecast is for equal chances of below-normal, normal and above-normal rainfall for all the future 3-month windows starting with the May-July window.

2008 LORS Release Guidance (Part C): With Lake Okeechobee stage within the Low Sub-band, the Tributary Hydrologic conditions in the Normal category and the multi-seasonal outlook in the Normal category, Part C of the 2008 LORS release guidance recommends “Up to Maximum Practicable to the WCAs if desirable or with minimum Everglades impacts. Otherwise no releases to the WCAs”.

Over the 7-day period from February 12, 2018 to February 18, 2018, STA 1E received 1,100 acre-feet of Lake Okeechobee regulatory releases, STA 2 received 5,200 acre-feet and STA 3/4 received 300 acre-feet. There were 1,300 acre-feet regulatory releases from the lake to tide through the C-51 canal. Releases from the lake in the amount of 2,300 acre-feet were sent to STA-1W to bring cells to target stages. Stage in WCA-1 is slightly below regulation schedule. Stage in WCA-2A remains above regulation schedule, but below the temporary deviation schedule. Stage in WCA-3A is in Zone E1 of the regulation schedule. For the coming operational period, the USACE is requesting the SFWMD implement maximum practicable releases from the lake south to all the WCAs.

2008 LORS Release Guidance (Part D): With Lake Okeechobee stage within the Low Sub-band, the Tributary Hydrologic Conditions in the Normal category, and the lake net inflow seasonal outlook in the Dry category, Part D of the 2008 LORS release guidance suggests Base Flow releases: “S-79 Up to 450 cfs and S-80 up to 200 cfs”.

Total discharge to the St. Lucie Estuary averaged around 200 cfs over the past week with no releases coming from Lake Okeechobee. The 7-day average salinity at the US1 Bridge is in the good range for adult oysters. Total inflow to Caloosahatchee Estuary averaged 700 cfs over the past week with 460 cfs (66%) coming from the Lake. Salinity conditions between Val I-75 and Ft. Myers remain good for tape grass. Salinity is in the good range for adult oysters at Shell Point and at Cape Coral.

The District has considered the application of the SFWMD’s Lake Okeechobee Adaptive Protocols (AP) this week since the lake stage is in the Low Sub-band and the LORS release guidance is recommending Base Flow releases. Given that the estuary does not need water, the AP recommendation is for “No S-77 releases to the Caloosahatchee Estuary ...”. The District recognizes the USACE desire to manage the lake stage by making Base Flow releases per the LORS release guidance and therefore recommends continuation of releases at S-77 to supplement the target release at S-79.