

MEMORANDUM

TO: Laureen Borocharner, Chief, Engineering Division (USACE)
FROM: John Mitnik, Chief District Engineer (SFWMD)
Akin Owosina, Chief, Hydrology & Hydraulics Bureau (SFWMD)
DATE: July 28, 2022
SUBJECT: Operational Position Statement for July 26, 2022 to August 1, 2022

This Position Statement is to provide operational recommendations for the one-week period from July 26, 2022 to August 1, 2022 based on system conditions and data observed during the previous Monday to Sunday 7-day period. On July 25, Lake Okeechobee stage was 13.04 feet NGVD, which places it within the Base Flow Sub-band of the 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS). Lake stage decreased by 0.01 feet over the preceding 7 days period.

District July to date rainfall is below average (~86% of normal). Rainfall forecast (issued July 26) indicates much below normal rainfall for the coming and the following 7-day period.

Precipitation Outlook: The most recent CPC precipitation outlooks for South Florida for August and for the 3-month window Aug – Oct are for slightly increased chances of above normal rainfall. The outlooks for the 3-month windows of Sep – Nov and Oct - Dec is for equal chances of below, normal and above normal rainfall. The outlooks for the 3-month windows from Nov 2022 - Jan 2023 to Dec 2022 - Feb 2023 are for slightly increased chances of below normal rainfall. The outlooks for the 3-month windows from Jan 2023 - Mar 2023 and Feb 2023 – Apr 2023 are for increased chances of below normal rainfall.

2008 LORS Release Guidance (Part C): With Lake Okeechobee stage within the Base Flow Sub-band, the Tributary Hydrologic Conditions in the near normal category and the Multi-seasonal Lake Okeechobee Net Inflow Outlook in the normal category, Part C of the 2008 LORS suggests “Maximum Practicable Releases to the WCAs if desirable or with minimum Everglades Impact”. Otherwise, no releases.

Over the 7-day period from July 18, 2022 to July 24, 2022 no deliveries from Lake Okeechobee were sent south to the STAs. No Lake regulatory releases reached the Lake Worth Lagoon through the C-51 canal. Stage in WCA-1 is above regulation schedule in Zone A1, stage in WCA-2A is above regulation schedule in Zone A, and WCA-3A stage is above regulation schedule in Zone A. For the coming operational period, the USACE is not requesting regulatory releases be sent south from Lake Okeechobee towards the WCAs.

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 450 cfs and S-80 Up to 200 cfs”.

For the 7-day period July 18, 2022 to July 24, 2022, total discharge to the St. Lucie Estuary was about 550 cfs with no flows coming from Lake Okeechobee. The 7-day average salinity in the middle estuary was within the optimal range (10-25) for adult eastern oysters. Total inflow to the Caloosahatchee Estuary averaged approximately 2,150 cfs over the past week with no flows coming from Lake Okeechobee. Salinities were in the optimal range (0-10) for tape grass in the upper estuary. Salinities were in the optimal range (10-25) for adult eastern oysters at Shell Point, in the stressed range at Cape Coral (5-9) and Sanibel (>25).

The District will continue to work with the USACE to manage Lake Okeechobee levels in an effort to curtail harmful discharges over this year. Generally speaking, the District and Corps should strive to move as much water out of the lake without harming natural resources and other critical resources. At this time, this involves releases that maintain appropriate salinity in the estuaries and ensuring the Stormwater Treatment Areas don't sustain long term damage from extended high-volume flows. Current District operational objectives are to continue to move water south from Lake Okeechobee for delivery to the Everglades where opportunities exist.

As salinity conditions have been in the stressed range for adult eastern oysters at the Cape Coral monitoring station for more than 51 days, the District recommends following LORS guidance until conditions stabilize. In addition, the District also recommends that the Corps not deliver an active algae bloom from the Lake through S-77 during this period. This decision should be reassessed as needed based on lake and estuarine conditions. The USACE typically implements the releases to the estuaries over a 7-day period starting on Saturday and ending on Friday.