

MEMORANDUM

TO: Laureen Borocharner, Chief, Engineering Division (USACE)
FROM: John Mitnik, Chief District Engineer (SFWMD)
Akin Owosina, Chief, Hydrology & Hydraulics Bureau (SFWMD)
DATE: June 17, 2021
SUBJECT: Operational Position Statement for June 15, 2021 to June 21, 2021

This Position Statement is to provide operational recommendations for the one-week period from June 15, 2021 to June 21, 2021 based on system conditions and data observed during the previous Monday to Sunday 7-day period. On June 14, Lake Okeechobee stage was 12.51 feet NGVD, which places it within the Beneficial Use Sub-band of the 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS). Lake stage decreased by 0.24 feet during the preceding 7 days.

June to date District rainfall is below normal (61% of normal). Rainfall forecast (issued June 15) predicts below average rainfall for the coming 7-day period and near average for the second 7-day period.

Precipitation Outlook: The most recent CPC precipitation outlooks for June 2021 and for the 3-month window of Jun-Aug are for slightly increased chances of above normal rainfall. The 3-month window of Jul-Sep shows increased chances of above-normal rainfall. The outlooks for the 3-month windows of Aug-Oct and Sep-Nov indicate slightly increased chances of above normal rainfall. The outlook for the remainder of the 3-month windows from Oct-Dec and into 2022 is for equal chances of above-normal, normal, and 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 June 7, 2021 to June 13, 2021, releases in the amount of 3,500 acre-feet were sent from Lake Okeechobee to STA-2, 5,500 acre-feet were sent to STA-3/4, and close to 100 ac-ft were sent from the Lake to STA-1W. These releases were for urban water supply needs and for Everglades deliveries. No releases were sent from Lake Okeechobee to the Lake Worth Lagoon through the C-51 canal. Stage in WCA-1 is below schedule (Zone A1), stage in WCA-2A is below schedule, and WCA-3A stage is below schedule (Zone B) and by May 23rd was below the floor elevation (Zone C). For the coming operational period, the USACE is not requesting maximum practical regulatory releases be sent south from Lake Okeechobee towards the WCAs.

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.

For the 7-day period June 7, 2021 to June 13, 2021 total discharge to the St. Lucie Estuary was near 200 cfs with no flows coming 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 1,000 cfs over the past week with nearly 600 cfs coming from Lake Okeechobee. Salinity conditions are in the good range for Tape Grass at Val I-75 and at Ft. Myers. Salinity conditions for adult eastern oysters are in the good range at Cape Coral and in the fair range at Shell Point and Sanibel. Additionally, *Karenia brevis* was observed off the mouth of the Caloosahatchee Estuary at background to medium concentrations in Lee County and in north Collier County.

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 move approximately 600 cfs south from Lake Okeechobee, for urban water supply needs and for delivery to the Everglades.

The District, in coordination with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), has considered the current system conditions and the application of the SFWMD's Lake Okeechobee Adaptive Protocols (AP) because the lake stage is in the Beneficial Use Sub-band and above the Lake Okeechobee Water Shortage Management zone. The AP recommendation is for "No S-77 release to the Caloosahatchee Estuary unless GB recommends otherwise". At this time, the District recommends the USACE continue lake releases to the Caloosahatchee Estuary in a pulse release fashion, measured at S-79, at a non-harmful level of 1,000 cfs (7-day average), while continuing to monitor estuary conditions and make any adjustments as necessary. 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.