

MEMORANDUM

TO: Laureen Borochaner, Chief, Engineering Division (USACE)
FROM: John Mitnik, Chief District Engineer (SFWMD)
Akin Owosina, Chief, Hydrology & Hydraulics Bureau (SFWMD)
DATE: June 20, 2019
SUBJECT: Operational Position Statement for June 18, 2019 to June 24, 2019

This Position Statement is for the one-week period from June 18, 2019 to June 24, 2019. On June 17, Lake Okeechobee stage was 11.18 feet NGVD, which places it within the Beneficial Use Sub-band of the 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS). Lake stage increased by 0.24 feet during the preceding 7 days.

District June rainfall to date is above average (130%). District rainfall forecast (issued June 18) predicts slightly below-average rainfall for this week and the following week.

Precipitation Outlook: The most recent CPC precipitation outlooks for June and all the 3-month windows from Jun-Aug to Sep-Nov are for equal chances of above-normal, normal, or below-normal rainfall for south Florida. The outlook for the first half of the 2019-2020 dry season is for slightly increased chances (37%) of above-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 10, 2019 to June 16, 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. Since the wet season rainfall is well established, the USACE has ceased utilizing Additional Operation Flexibility (AOF) within LORS2008 Water Control Plan as documented in the February 22, 2019 Memorandum For the Record (MFR). Therefore, no releases to the WCAs are currently required to manage lake stages.

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 being below 11.3 NGVD, the majority of the lake littoral zone marshes are dry. Total discharge to the St. Lucie Estuary averaged approximately 750 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 2,850 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. Salinity conditions are in the good range for adult oysters at Cape Coral, Shell Point and Sanibel locations.

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". At this time, the District recommends that the USACE continue beneficial flows from S-79 on the order of 450 cfs, with reliance primarily on local basin runoff, in order to maintain a favorable salinity gradient in the Caloosahatchee estuary. Furthermore, the District recommends that releases be reevaluated on a weekly basis in order to increase flexibility of decision making based on current conditions.