MEMORANDUM

TO: Laureen Borochaner, Chief, Engineering Division (USACE)

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

DATE: March 21, 2019

SUBJECT: Operational Position Statement for March 19, 2019 to March 25, 2019

This Position Statement is for the one-week period from March 19, 2019 to March 25, 2019. On March 18, the Lake Okeechobee stage was 12.18 feet NGVD, which places it within the Beneficial Use Sub-band of the 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS). The Lake stage decreased by 0.29 feet during the preceding 7 days.

District rainfall for March to date is average (99%), after accounting for substantial rainfall the District received between March 18 and March 20. District rainfall forecast (issued March 19) predicts above-average rainfall for this week and below-average for the following week.

Precipitation Outlook: The CPC precipitation outlook for March is for equal chances of above-normal, normal, or below normal rainfall for south Florida. The outlook for the 3-month window Mar-May is for increased chances (45%) of above-normal north of Lake Okeechobee and slightly increased chances (37%) of above normal precipitation for the rest of the District. The outlook for the 3-month windows from Apr-Jun to May-Jul is for slightly increased chances (37%) of above-normal precipitation. All periods starting with the Jun-Aug window show equal chances of above-normal, normal, or 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 March 11, 2019 to March 17, 2019, STA-1E received 700 acre-feet of Lake Okeechobee releases, STA-2 received 3,400 acre-feet and the A-1 FEB received 13,100 acre-feet. Lake Okeechobee releases in the amount of 6,900 acre-feet were discharged 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 E1 of the regulation schedule. For the coming operational period, the USACE is utilizing Additional Operation Flexibility (AOF) within LORS2008 Water Control Plan as documented in the February 22, 2019 Memorandum For the Record (MFR). **Based on this**, **for the coming operational period, the USACE is directing the District to continue sending Lake Okeechobee regulatory releases south to WCA-1, WCA-2A, WCA-3A and to the Lake Worth Lagoon through the C-51 canal.**

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.

Total discharge to the St. Lucie Estuary averaged approximately 500 cfs over the past week with 250 cfs (50%) 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 2,000 cfs over the past week with about 1,200 cfs (60%) 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 Shell Point and Cape Coral.

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". The District recognizes the USACE's responsibility to control lake stages. At this time, the District recommends that the USACE follows LORS 2008 to move water towards the Caloosahatchee Estuary, and if necessary the St. Lucie Estuary, in a flexible manner which maintains ecosystem salinity conditions that support existing and recovering ecological resources. Furthermore, the District recommends that releases be reevaluated on a weekly basis in order to increase flexibility of decision making based on current conditions.