

MEMORANDUM

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

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

DATE: May 23, 2019

SUBJECT: Operational Position Statement for May 21, 2019 to May 27, 2019

This Position Statement is for the one-week period from May 21, 2019 to May 27, 2019. On May 20, the Lake Okeechobee stage was 11.22 feet NGVD, which places it within the Beneficial Use Sub-band of the 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS). The Lake stage decreased by 0.08 feet during the preceding 7 days.

District May rainfall to date is above average (164%). District rainfall forecast (issued May 21) predicts well below-average rainfall for this week and below-average rainfall for 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 May 13, 2019 to May 19, 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 below 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). **For the coming operational period, the USACE is directing the District to send no Lake Okeechobee regulatory releases south or 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.

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 450 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 1,350 cfs over the past week with about 150 cfs (11%) 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. Surface salinity at the Sanibel location is in the fair range for adult oysters.

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 follow LORS 2008, using its operational flexibility to continue beneficial flows from S-79 in the range of 600 cfs – 800 cfs in order to maintain a favorable salinity gradient in the Caloosahatchee estuary, in recognition of the dry forecast for the coming 7-day period and the fact that the lake stage is receding again. Furthermore, the District recommends that releases be reevaluated on a weekly basis in order to increase flexibility of decision making based on current conditions.

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