

MEMORANDUM

TO: Jason Engle, Chief, Engineering Division (USACE)
FROM: John Mitnik, Chief District Engineer (SFWMD)
DATE: September 24, 2026
SUBJECT: System Operational Position Statement September 22, 2026 to September 28, 2026

This Position Statement is to provide operational input for the one-week period from September 22, 2026 to September 28, 2026 based on system conditions and data observed during the previous Monday to Sunday 7-day period.

Current climate conditions: District September rainfall to date is much above normal (173% normal). The rainfall forecast (issued September 23) calls for much below normal rainfall for the coming 7-day period and near to above average for the following period.

Climate and weather forecasts: The most recent CPC precipitation outlook for Oct 2026 is equal chances of below, normal and above normal rainfall (EC) for the entire District. El Niño is present and will strengthen through the end of the year. The 3-month windows of Oct 2026 – Dec 2026 and Nov 2026 – Jan 2027 are substantial increased chances (50-60%) of above Normal rainfall for the Kissimmee River and north, and increased chances (40-50%) to slightly increased chances (33-40%) of above Normal rainfall for the remainder of the District. The 3-month windows of Dec 2026 – Feb 2027 and Jan 2027 – Mar 2027 show outlooks for substantial increased chances (50-60%) of below normal rainfall for the entire District. The outlook for the 3-month window of Feb 2027 – Apr 2027 indicates substantial increased chances (50-60%) of above normal rainfall for the Lake Okeechobee and north, and increased chances (40-50%) of above normal for the respective remainder areas of the District. The 3-month windows Mar 2027 – May 2027 shows slightly increased chances (33-40%) of above normal rainfall for the Lake Okeechobee and north, and equal chances of below, normal and above normal rainfall (EC) for the remainder of the District. The transition into the 2027 wet season shows equal chances of below, normal and above normal rainfall (EC) for the remainder of the District.

Hydrologic and tropical outlooks: Current climatological conditions are Normal. Current hydrological conditions are Normal. The lake stage is in the Water Shortage Management Zone (WSMZ) and is projected to stay within the WSMZ for next two months.

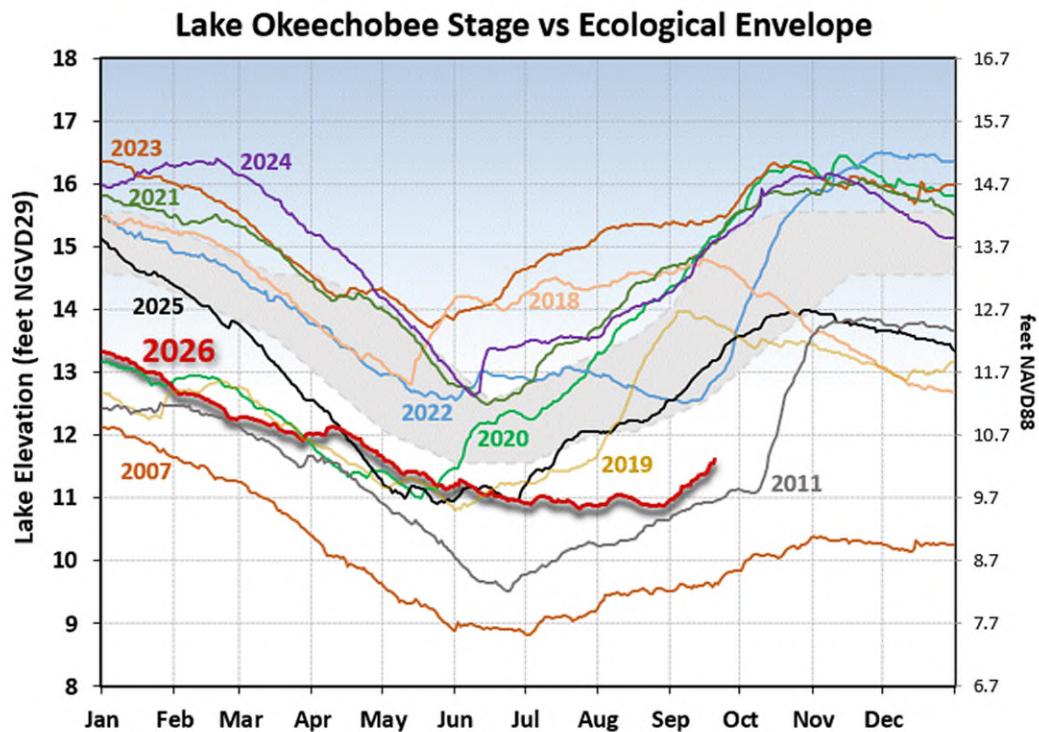
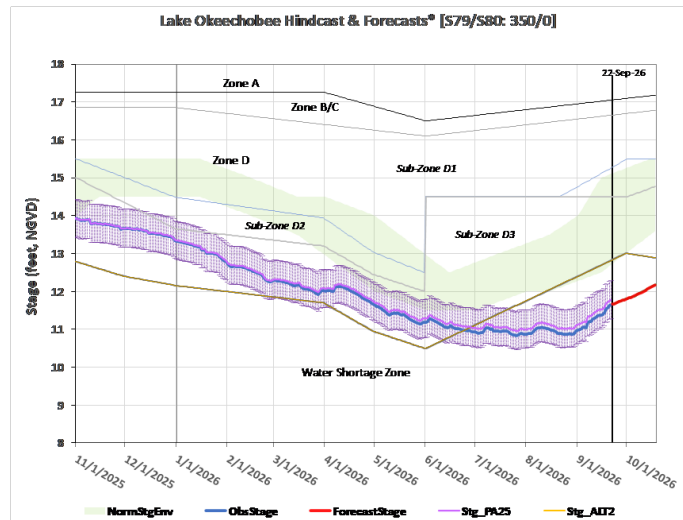
Water-supply conditions: The Lake Okeechobee seasonal net inflow outlook is Normal and at Low risk for water supply. The multi-seasonal net inflow outlook is Normal and at Moderate risk for water supply.

Estuary conditions: For the past 7-day periods, September 14 to September 20, 2026, total inflow to the Caloosahatchee River Estuary averaged approximately 5,500 cfs with no flow coming from Lake Okeechobee through S-77. Salinities were in the optimal range (0-10) for tape grass in the upper estuary. Salinities were in the lower stressed range (<10) for adult eastern oysters at Cape Coral, in the optimal range (10-25) at Shell Point, and in the upper stressed range (>25) at Sanibel. Total inflow to the St. Lucie Estuary was about 2,500 cfs with no flow coming from Lake Okeechobee, and C-44 Basin, about 400 cfs coming from C-23 Basin, about 950 cfs coming from C-24 Basin, about 450 cfs coming from the Ten Mile Creek Basin, and about 750 cfs coming from Tidal Basin. The average salinity in the middle estuary was within the optimal range (10-25) for adult eastern oysters.

Lake Okeechobee stage and ecological conditions:

On September 20, the daily average Lake Okeechobee stage was 10.31 feet NAVD88 (11.62 feet NGVD29), which placed it within the Water Shortage Management Zone (WSMZ) of the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM). Lake stage increased by 0.26 feet over the preceding 7-day period. El Niño conditions are present, and will strengthen through the end of the year. The District will continue to monitor conditions in the estuaries, as well as the systemwide conditions. Normal Lake Operations continue pursuant to the considerations in LOSOM as informed by PA25. Given the estuary salinity conditions, it is recommended that flow targets for the Caloosahatchee Estuary should rely on basin flows only, and not be supplemented with Lake Okeechobee water; flow targets for the St. Lucie Estuary and Lake Worth Lagoon should remain at 0 cfs. The District will continue to monitor salinity conditions in the estuaries and water supply conditions within the Lake Okeechobee Service Area. The USACE typically implements the releases to the estuaries over a 7-day period starting on Saturday and ending on Friday.

Forecast Modeling Based on PA25 Simulation



The current and seven prior years' annual stage hydrographs for Lake Okeechobee in comparison to the ecological envelope (light grey).

Navigation and recreation conditions: There are five navigational boat locks (S-135/G-36/S-127/S-131/S-193) that are closed. Boaters are encouraged to exercise caution on the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal). Public access along the L-29, L-67A and L-67C Canals near Tamiami Trail in Miami-Dade County is closed for maintenance activities.

STOF water supply conditions: Current Lake Okeechobee stage is sufficiently high that water supply deliveries to the Seminole Tribe of Florida (STOF) Brighton Reservation, if needed, will not be impacted. When Lake Okeechobee stage recedes below 8.75 feet NAVD88 (10 feet NGVD29) and 6.75 feet NAVD88 (8 feet NGVD29), water supply delivery is not achievable via Pump Station G-207 on the Harney Pond Canal and Pump Station G-208 on the Indian Prairie Canal, respectively, as the respective canals become disconnected from Lake Okeechobee.

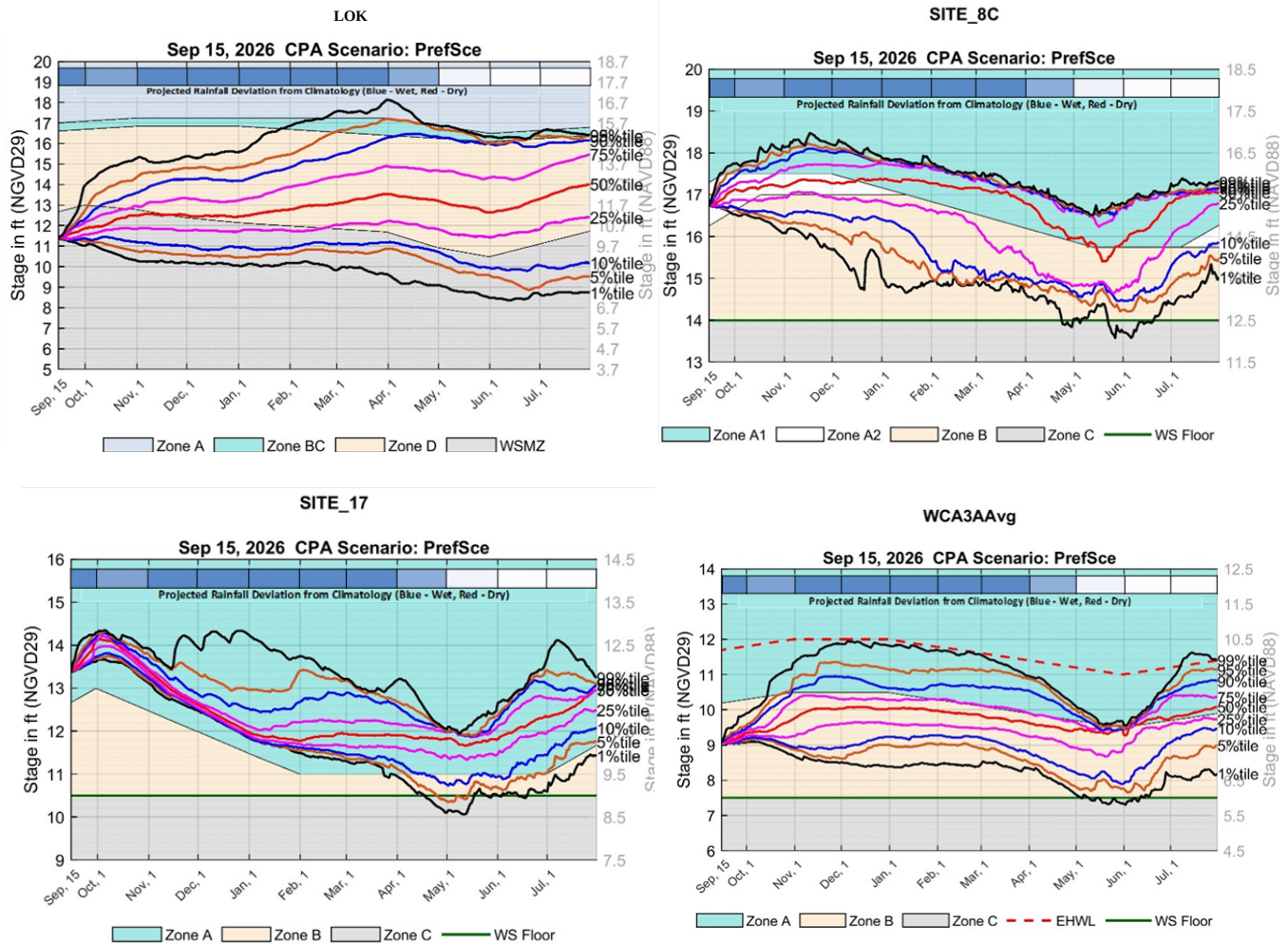
Algal Bloom conditions: The Fish and Wildlife Research Institute reported on September 18, 2026, that *Karenia brevis*, the Florida red tide dinoflagellate, was not observed at bloom concentrations in any samples collected within the District region. In the most recent non-observed satellite image from September 19, 2026, NOAA's Harmful Algal Bloom Monitoring System suggests moderate to high cyanobacteria potential in the western and central regions of the Lake.

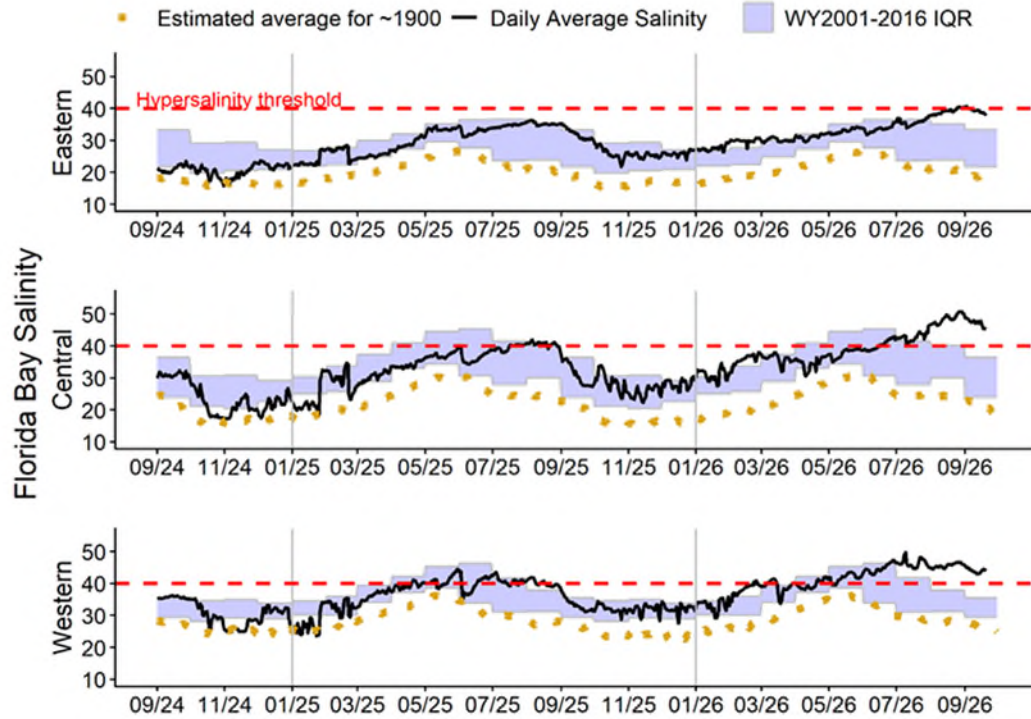
STA conditions: In STA-1E, Central Flow-way is offline for construction activities. An operational restriction is in place in the Western Flow-way for post-construction vegetation grow-in. Online treatment cells are at or above target stage. In STA-1W, Eastern Flow-way is offline for vegetation management activities. Treatment cells are at or above target stage. Vegetation in the Western and Eastern Flow-ways is highly stressed. The 365-day PLRs for the Northern and Western Flow-ways are below 1.0 g/m²/yr. In STA-2, treatment cells are at or above target stage. An operational restriction is in place in Flow way 2 for vegetation management activities. The 365-day PLRs for all Flow-ways are below 1.0 g/m²/yr. In STA-3/4, an operational restriction is in place in the Eastern Flow-way for vegetation management activities. Most treatment cells are at or above target stage. Vegetation in the Central Flow-way is highly stressed. The 365-day PLRs for the Eastern, Central, and Western Flow-ways are below 1.0 g/m²/yr. For the current operational period, USACE is not requesting flows south from Lake Okeechobee towards the WCAs. The District will continue to work with the USACE to manage Lake Okeechobee levels in an effort to curtail harmful discharges over this year. To help with this objective the District will move as much water south through the Stormwater Treatment Areas as possible under the current permits as regional conditions allow.

WCA conditions: On September 20, the daily average stage in WCA-1 was at 15.51 feet NAVD88 (17.25 feet NGVD29), in Zone A2 and 0.17 feet below regulation schedule. The daily average stage in WCA-2A was at 12.29 feet NAVD88 (13.80 feet NGVD29), in Zone A and 1.01 feet above regulation schedule. The daily average stage in WCA-3A was at 7.72 feet NAVD88 (9.24 feet NGVD29), in Zone B and 0.99 feet below regulation schedule. Over the 7-day periods, September 14, 2026 to September 20, 2026, no regulatory releases were sent from Lake Okeechobee south to the STAs. No Lake regulatory releases reached Lake Worth Lagoon through the C-51 canal during this period.

ENP conditions: Releases from WCA-3A to the ENP continue through the S12D and the S333 structures. Connectivity in both Taylor Slough and Shark River Slough improved over the last month, with greater potential for connectivity in the west compared to last week. Depths across WCA-1 and WCA-2A are significantly increased compared to a month ago. Water levels continue increasing in NE WCA-3A but remain below the 10th percentile across WCA-3A. The Big Cypress basin is also showing a stable wetting trend. Stages have increased in Taylor Slough over the past week and remain above the recent average. Salinity decreased on average in Florida Bay compared to last week and remains above the estimated historical average and above the WY2001-2016 Interquartile Range (IQR) 75th percentile in all regions. The Tamiami Trail Flow Formula (TTFF) recommends 716 cfs of daily target releases from WCA-3A to ENP. The District recommends continuing with the current operations for the releases from WCA-3A in accordance with the Combined Operating Plan.

September 15, 2026 Conditional Position Analysis (CPA) results for Lake Okeechobee, WCA-1, WCA-2A and WCA-3A under LOSOM Operations.





Eastern (top panel), Central (middle panel) and Western (bottom panel) Florida Bay daily average salinities with WY2001-2016 interquartile (25-75 percentile) ranges (IQR) and estimated historical daily average salinities. The hyper salinity threshold indicates the level at which salinities start to become harmful to seagrass.