MEMORANDUM

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

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

DATE: December 3, 2020

SUBJECT: Operational Position Statement for December 1, 2020 to December 7, 2020

This Position Statement is to provide operational recommendations for the one-week period from December 1, 2020 to December 7, 2020 based on system conditions and data observed during the last 7 days. On November 30, Lake Okeechobee stage was 16.13 feet NGVD, which places it within the Low Sub-band of the 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS). Lake stage decreased by 0.14 feet during the preceding 7 days.

November District rainfall amount was extreme (above 300% of normal). Rainfall forecast (issued December 01) predicts below average rainfall for the District for the next 7-day period and below to near-normal rainfall for the following 7-day period.

Precipitation Outlook: The most recent CPC precipitation outlook for Dec 2020 calls for equal chances of above-normal, normal, and below-normal rainfall. The outlooks for the 3-month windows from Dec-Feb to Feb-Apr call for substantially increased chances of below-normal rainfall. The outlook for the 3-month window Mar-May is for increased chances of below-normal rainfall. The outlook for the 3-month window Apr-Jun is for equal chances of above-normal, normal, and below-normal rainfall. The outlook for the transition to the 2021 wet season is for slightly increased chances of above normal rainfall.

2008 LORS Release Guidance (Part C): With Lake Okeechobee stage within the Low Sub-band, the Tributary Hydrologic Conditions in the Normal category, and the Multi-seasonal Lake Okeechobee Net Inflow Outlook in the Wet category, Part C of the 2008 LORS suggests “Up to Maximum Practicable Releases to WCAs if desirable or with minimum Everglades Impact; otherwise no releases to the Everglades”.

Over the 7-day period from November 23 to November 29, 2020, no Lake Okeechobee releases were sent to the STAs. No Lake regulatory releases reached the Lake Worth Lagoon through the C-51 canal. Stage in WCA-1 is slightly above schedule (Zone A1), stage in WCA-2A is above schedule (Zone A), and WCA-3A stage is above schedule (Zone A). For the coming operational period, the USACE is not requesting regulatory releases be sent south from Lake Okeechobee towards the WCAs.

2008 LORS Release Guidance (Part D): With Lake Okeechobee stage in the Low Sub-band, the Tributary Hydrologic Conditions in the Normal category and the Seasonal Lake Okeechobee Net Inflow Outlook in the Dry category, Part D of the 2008 LORS suggests “S-79 up to 450 cfs and S-80 up to 200 cfs ”.

For the 7-day period November 24 to November 30, 2020, total discharge to the St. Lucie Estuary was around 2,450 cfs with approximately 1,600 cfs from Lake Okeechobee. The 7-day average salinity at the US1 Bridge is in the poor range for adult oysters. Total inflow to the Caloosahatchee Estuary averaged approximately 5,650 cfs over the past week with around 3,600 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 Shell Point and Sanibel and in the poor range at Cape Coral.

The District will continue to work with the USACE to manage Lake Okeechobee levels in an effort to end harmful discharges. Given the seasonal dry forecast condition for south Florida and the signal from LORS 2008 to decrease regulatory releases to the estuaries, the District recommends USACE develops and implements, in cooperation with the District and stakeholders, a plan to gradually reduce discharges to the estuaries to a non-harmful discharge level. The USACE typically implements the releases to the estuaries over a 7-day period starting on Saturday and ending on Friday.