

MEMORANDUM

TO: Laureen Borocharner, Chief, Engineering Division (USACE)
FROM: John Mitnik, Chief District Engineer (SFWMD)
Akin Owosina, Chief, Hydrology & Hydraulics Bureau (SFWMD)
DATE: January 21, 2021
SUBJECT: Operational Position Statement for January 19, 2021 to January 25, 2021

This Position Statement is to provide operational recommendations for the one-week period from January 19, 2021 to January 25, 2021 based on system conditions and data observed during the last 7 days. On January 18, Lake Okeechobee stage was 15.64 feet NGVD, which places it within the Low Sub-band of the 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS). Lake stage decreased by 0.03 feet during the preceding 7 days.

January District rainfall to date is well below average (21% of normal). Rainfall forecast (issued January 19) predicts below average rainfall for the District for the coming 7-day period and the following 7-day period.

Precipitation Outlook: The most recent CPC precipitation outlook for January 2021 calls for equal chances of above-normal, normal, and below-normal rainfall. The outlooks for the 3-month windows from Jan-Mar and 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 Normal 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 January 11, 2021 to January 17, 2021, no regulatory releases from Lake Okeechobee were sent to the STAs. No Lake regulatory releases were sent to the Lake Worth Lagoon through the C-51 canal. Stage in WCA-1 is 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 Multi-seasonal Lake Okeechobee Net Inflow Outlook in the Normal 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 January 11, 2021 to January 17, 2021, total discharge to the St. Lucie Estuary was around 200 cfs with no flows coming 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 1,150 cfs over the past week with around 550 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, Sanibel and Cape Coral. Additionally, high counts of *Karenia brevis* continue to be observed off the mouth of the Caloosahatchee Estuary.

The District will continue to work with the USACE to manage Lake Okeechobee levels in an effort to curtail harmful discharges over this year. Given the seasonal dry forecast condition for south Florida, and current lake levels, the District recommends USACE continue discharge to the estuaries at a non-harmful level like 1,000 cfs to the Caloosahatchee Estuary, measured at S-79, and no lake discharges to the St. Lucie Estuary for the next week. In addition, this decision should be reassessed on a weekly basis. The USACE typically implements the releases to the estuaries over a 7-day period starting on Saturday and ending on Friday.