

MEMORANDUM

TO: Laureen Borochaner, Chief, Engineering Division (USACE)
FROM: John Mitnik, Chief District Engineer (SFWMD)
Akin Owosina, Chief, Hydrology & Hydraulics Bureau (SFWMD)
DATE: March 5, 2020
SUBJECT: Operational Position Statement for March 3, 2020 to March 9, 2020

This Position Statement is for the one-week period from March 3, 2020 to March 9, 2020. On March 2, Lake Okeechobee stage was 12.64 feet NGVD, which places it within the Base Flow Sub-band of the 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS). Lake stage decreased by 0.14 feet during the preceding 7 days.

District February rainfall is average (100% of average). District rainfall forecast (issued March 3) predicts below average rainfall for this 7-day period and for the following period.

Precipitation Outlook: The most recent CPC precipitation outlook for March 2020 calls for increased chances of below-normal rainfall for the entire District. The outlook for the 3-month window Mar-May is for slightly increased chances of above-normal rainfall for areas north of the lake, and equal chances of above-normal, normal, or below-normal rainfall for the remainder of the District. The outlook for the 3-month window Apr-Jun is for slightly increased chances of above-normal rainfall. All the other the 3-month windows to the end of the 2020 wet season call for equal chances of above-normal, normal, or below-normal rainfall.

2008 LORS Release Guidance (Part C): With Lake Okeechobee stage within the Base Flow Sub-band and the tributary hydrologic conditions in the Dry category, Part C of the 2008 LORS suggests “No Releases to the WCAs”.

Over the 7-day period from February 24 to March 1, 2020 Lake Regulatory releases in the amount of 4,500 acre-feet went to STA 2 and 6,900 acre-feet were sent to the A-1 FEB STA 3/4 complex. No Lake Regulatory releases were sent to the Lake Worth Lagoon through the C-51 canal. Stage in WCA-1 is in Zone A1 of the regulation schedule. Stage in WCA-2A is in Zone A of the regulation schedule. WCA-3A stage is in Zone E of the regulation schedule. For the current operational period the USACE is requesting the SFWMD not implement regulatory releases south from Lake Okeechobee to the WCAs.

2008 LORS Release Guidance (Part D): With Lake Okeechobee stage in the Base Flow Sub-band, Part D of the 2008 LORS suggests “S-79 Up to 450 cfs and S-80 Up to 200 cfs”.

Total discharge to the St. Lucie Estuary averaged approximately 435 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 670 cfs over the past week with about 360 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 Cape Coral and Shell Point, and in the fair range at the Sanibel location.

The District, in coordination with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), has considered the current system conditions and the application of the SFWMD’s Lake Okeechobee Adaptive Protocols (AP) because the lake stage is in the Base Flow Sub-band and LORS 2008 suggests Base Flow releases to the Estuaries. The SFWMD recommends the USACE follow LORS 2008, and continue to monitor salinity conditions in the Caloosahatchee Estuary with a mind towards releases that support a healthy estuarine environment. The District will continue to move water to WCA-3A, where water levels are low, as long as water is available in the A-1 FEB.