

MEMORANDUM

TO: Laureen Borocharner, Chief, Engineering Division (USACE)
FROM: John Mitnik, Chief District Engineer (SFWMD)
Akin Owosina, Chief, Hydrology & Hydraulics Bureau (SFWMD)
DATE: March 19, 2020
SUBJECT: Operational Position Statement for March 17, 2020 to March 23, 2020

This Position Statement is for the one-week period from March 17, 2020 to March 23, 2020. On March 16, Lake Okeechobee stage was 12.36 feet NGVD, which places it within the Beneficial Use Sub-band of the 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS). Lake stage decreased by 0.08 feet during the preceding 7 days.

District March rainfall to date is below average (8% of average). District rainfall forecast (issued March 17) 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 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 March 9 to March 15, 2020 Lake releases in the amount of 800 acre-feet went 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.

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.

Total discharge to the St. Lucie Estuary averaged approximately 170 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 690 cfs over the past week with about 490 cfs coming from Lake Okeechobee. Salinity conditions are in the good range for Tape Grass at Val I-75 and fair range 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 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". At this time, the District recommends to continue sending beneficial flows of 650 cfs, as measured at S-79, to maintain a favorable salinity conditions in the Caloosahatchee estuary. Furthermore, the District recommends that releases be reevaluated on a weekly basis in order to increase flexibility of decision making based on current conditions.