MEMORANDUM

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

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

DATE: September 17, 2020

SUBJECT: Operational Position Statement for September 15, 2020 to September 21, 2020

This Position Statement is to provide operational recommendations for the one-week period from September 15, 2020 to September 21, 2020 based on system conditions and data observed during the last 7 days. On September 14, Lake Okeechobee stage was 14.88 feet NGVD, which places it within the Low Sub-band of the 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS). Lake stage increased by 0.38 feet during the preceding 7 days.

September to date rainfall over the District is above average (128% of normal). District rainfall forecast (issued September 16) predicts below average rainfall for the next 7-day period and near average for the following period.

Precipitation Outlook: The most recent CPC precipitation outlooks for September 2020 and for the 3-month window of Sep-Nov show increased chances of above normal rainfall for south Florida. The outlook for the 3-month window of Oct-Dec is for equal chances of above-normal, normal, and below-normal rainfall. The precipitation outlook for the 3-month window Nov-Jan is for slightly increased chances of below normal rainfall. The outlook for the 3-month windows Dec-Feb and Jan-Mar call for increased chances of below normal rainfall for Lake Okeechobee and areas to the north, and slightly increased chances of below normal rainfall for the remainder of the District. The outlook corresponding to the remaining months in the dry season show equal chances of above-normal, normal, and below-normal rainfall.

2008 LORS Release Guidance (Part C): With Lake Okeechobee stage within the Low Sub-band, the Tributary Hydrologic Conditions in the Very Wet 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 to the WCAs if desirable or with minimum Everglades impact; otherwise no releases to WCAs”.

Over the 7-day period from September 7 to September 13, 2020, no Lake Okeechobee regulatory releases 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, although all the WCAs are above their respective regulation schedules, the USACE is requesting up to maximum practicable releases be sent south from Lake Okeechobee towards WCA-1, WCA-2A and WCA-3A while considering available treatment capacity within the STAs. In addition, USACE is requesting up to maximum practicable releases from WCA-2A be sent to tide.

2008 LORS Release Guidance (Part D): With Lake Okeechobee stage in the Low Sub-band, the Tributary Hydrologic Conditions in the Very Wet category, Lake stage less than 1.0 ft below the Intermediate Sub-band and the Multi-seasonal Lake Okeechobee Net Inflow Outlook in the Normal category, Part D of the 2008 LORS suggests “S-79 Up to 3,000 cfs and S-80 Up to 1,170 cfs”.

For the 7-day period September 8 to September 14, 2020, total discharge to the St. Lucie Estuary averaged approximately 2,200 cfs 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 5,800 cfs over the past week with no flows 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 fair range at Cape Coral.

Given the forecast and current system conditions, the District recommends the USACE take the necessary steps to manage lake stage, as allowed within LORS 2008, while maintaining favorable salinity conditions in the Caloosahatchee Estuary. The USACE typically implements the releases to the estuaries over a 7-day period starting on Saturday and ending on Friday.