



FOR YOUR INFORMATION

This fact sheet is provided as a reference to encourage a greater understanding of the various issues related to managing water in South Florida.

Adaptive Protocols for Lake Okeechobee Operations

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers manages Lake Okeechobee water levels with the goal of balancing flood control, public safety, navigation, water supply and ecological health. The Corps bases operational decisions on its federal regulation schedule and the best available science, data and recommendations provided by its staff and a variety of partners, including the South Florida Water Management District.

Defining Adaptive Protocols

- Adaptive Protocols guide District water managers, in their advisory capacity, when making recommendations to the Corps on Lake Okeechobee operations.
- Measures identified in the Adaptive Protocols are used to manage the volume, timing and delivery of water out of Lake Okeechobee to more equitably distribute water deliveries between permitted users and natural systems — for the benefit of wildlife and habitat protection and saltwater management.
- The guidance document also serves as an informational tool regarding operational decisions related to the lake.

Developing New Protocols

- Beginning in August 2009, the District worked with the Corps, environmental groups, permitted water users and other stakeholders to update the Adaptive Protocols for Lake Okeechobee Operations.
- Completed in September 2010, this guidance document addresses flexible points in the Corps' current regulation schedule that allow for regulatory and environmental releases but do not specify a particular amount to be released.
- To achieve this, the District conducted an open and public process in developing the updated Adaptive Protocols through monthly meetings of a Water Resources Advisory Commission (WRAC) special issues team.



- District scientists and engineers utilized computer model simulations to estimate benefits and impacts of proposed protocols.

Implementation of Adaptive Protocols

- The updated Adaptive Protocols enhance the balance between permitted users and natural systems by:
 - Improving salinity levels in the Caloosahatchee Estuary.
 - Reducing the chances of the lake level falling low enough to create a water shortage.
 - Limiting exceedances of Lake Okeechobee's minimum flows and levels (MFL) rule, which can cause ecological harm to the lake.
- The Adaptive Protocols do not revise the Corps' Lake Okeechobee regulation schedule or the District water shortage rule.
- District scientists and engineers are continuing to evaluate the effectiveness of the Adaptive Protocols.

