



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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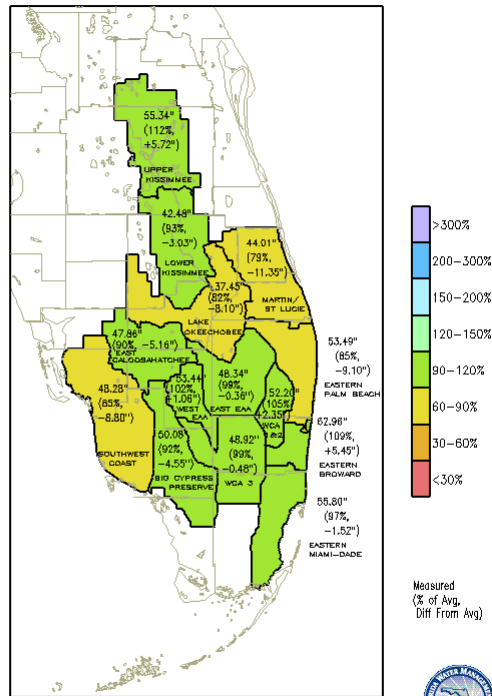
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2009 Roller Coaster of Weather Extremes, Water Management Challenges *Coastal rainfall helps Broward County water resources*

SFWMD Rainfall
02-JAN-2009 to 31-DEC-2009



DISTRICT-WIDE: 48.48" (93%, -3.39")

GADS: COLA/IGES

2008-12-31-19:02

(Click on picture for a larger version.)

West Palm Beach, FL — Last January, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) entered 2009 during the driest six-month period in South Florida’s history. The month of May set a rainfall record followed by a near-record dry October. The new year begins with caution as the height of the dry season looms once again.

“One of the District’s greatest challenges is managing flood control and water supply for 7.5 million residents and businesses across 16 counties, along with ecosystems such

as the Everglades,” said SFWMD Governing Board member Shannon Estenoz. “The Governing Board strives to be as informed as possible to make responsible decisions. One fact has become very clear – conservation will help sustain our water supply now and for future generations.”

Last winter and early spring, water managers were faced with an average 10.13-inch rainfall deficit by the end of the dry season in April 2009. In an abrupt turnabout, May 2009 became the wettest May on record, with 9.04 inches of rain falling across the District. The 2009 wet season reached 40.09 inches of rainfall from May through the last days of October, representing a nearly average amount for this time period. Yet by month’s end, October became the fourth driest October on record. From a water supply perspective, significant rainfall in December helped replenish many groundwater resources, particularly along the east coast.

Lake Okeechobee began the year close to 14 feet NGVD, dipped to about 11 feet around mid-May and rebounded back to approximately 14.5 feet in mid-September. The lake level on December 31 was 13.58 feet NGVD. This range provides near ideal conditions for submerged and emergent aquatic vegetation, the foundation of lake wildlife. Apple snails – the sole food of the endangered snail kite – as well as breeding fish and birds thrive in these conditions.

In all, a total of 48.48 inches of rain fell District-wide from January 1 through December 31, 2009, which is 93 percent of the average and represents a 3.39-inch deficit. Locally, eastern Broward County began the year with slightly more rainfall than most of the District yet still faced dry conditions. A total of 7.40 inches of rain fell from January to the end of April 2009, representing 68 percent of the average, or a deficit of 3.51 inches.

The wet season began in May, and the county ended the year with a total of 62.96 inches of rainfall, representing 109 percent of the average.

“While rain showers helped replenish Broward’s water supplies, we know that dry conditions can return quickly,” Estenoz added. “This is a central reason why the Governing Board adopted the year-round water conservation measures, which place permanent limits on landscape irrigation to help protect South Florida’s water resources.”

The SFWMD continues to closely monitor water levels and is urging residents and businesses to conserve water and follow landscape irrigation restrictions in effect. More information about irrigation restrictions by area is available on the District’s [water restrictions](#) Web site. For water saving tips, visit www.savewaterfl.com.

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About the South Florida Water Management District

The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state – 16 counties from Orlando to the Keys. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts. The agency mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply. A key initiative is cleanup and restoration of the Everglades.