



supply and flood control, making practices that save water a priority for all of South Florida.”

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, the Florida Keys began the year amid dry conditions, with an estimated 3.50 inches of rainfall from January to the end of April, representing 45 percent of the average and a deficit of 4.26 inches. The lack of rainfall prompted the District to temporarily implement one-day-a-week landscape irrigation restrictions in South Miami-Dade and Monroe counties to protect the Keys’ water resources.

The wet season began in May, and the Keys ended the year with an estimated total of 33.50 inches of rainfall, representing 84 percent of the average and a deficit of 6.44 inches.

“The roller-coaster weather conditions in recent years helped create broad agreement in South Florida that water conservation is necessary to ensure a sustainable supply of water for years to come,” Collins said. “Out of that consensus, the Governing Board adopted year-round water conservation measures that permanently limit landscape irrigation, the single largest use of household water in our region.”

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](http://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.*