



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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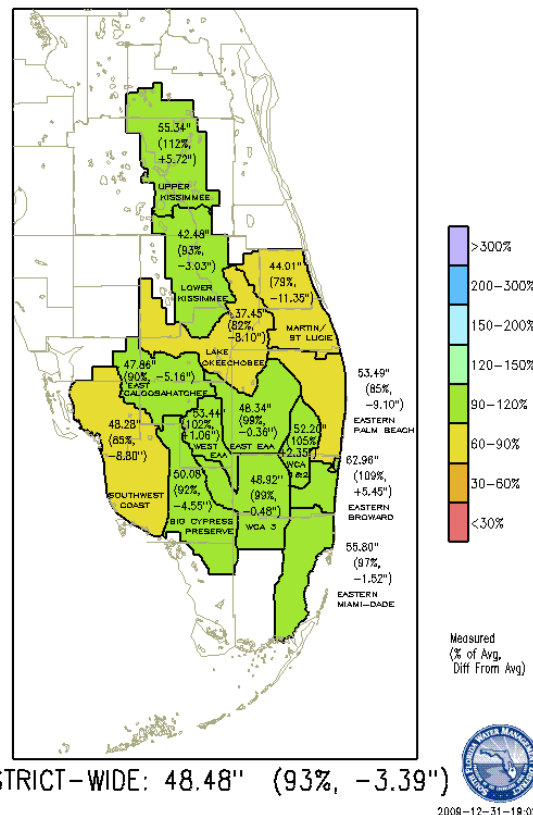
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2009 Roller Coaster of Weather Extremes, Water Management Challenges *Water conditions in Kissimmee Basin illustrated Florida's weather variability*

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



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

(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.

"Variable weather challenges us to balance the needs of water supply and environmental protection, including restoration of Kissimmee River and the

Everglades,” said SFWMD Governing Board Vice Chair Jerry Montgomery. “One fact remained clear during the swing from dry to wet conditions and back again — water conservation is the smartest strategy to protect vital resources into the future.”

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 Kissimmee region began the year amid dry conditions. The upper Kissimmee received 3.89 inches of rainfall from January to the end of April 2009, representing 37 percent of the average, or a 6.71-inch deficit. The lower Kissimmee received 3.45 inches of rainfall, representing 38 percent of the average, or a 5.75-inch deficit.

The wet season began in May, and the Kissimmee region ended the year having received significant rainfall. The upper Kissimmee received 55.34 inches of rainfall for the year, representing 112 percent of the average. The lower Kissimmee received 42.48 inches of rainfall, representing 93 percent of the average, or a 3.03-inch deficit.

“These varying conditions led the Governing Board to adopt year-round water conservation measures that place permanent limits on landscape irrigation,” Montgomery added. “The rule fosters a conservation ethic and is just one component of a comprehensive water conservation program that will help protect South Florida into the future.”

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.