



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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Lake Tohopekaliga Lock Refurbishment Near Completion *S-61 navigation lock has resumed operation for boating public*



The S-61 navigation lock is back in service after six months of refurbishment work. (SFWMD file photo)

Kissimmee, FL – The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) has placed the S-61 navigation lock on Lake Tohopekaliga back in service for boaters to begin the New Year.

Also known as the Southport Lock, the 50-year-old navigation lock is one of four in the Kissimmee Basin that has undergone more than six months of refurbishment. While work will continue at the S-61 for about another month, the lock is functioning to allow boats to pass back and forth through it between Lake Tohopekaliga and the C-35 canal.

“Recognizing that the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes is a sport fishing destination and the site of nationally recognized bass tournaments, we are doing everything we can to get this work done as quickly as possible,” said Tommy Strowd, SFWMD Deputy Executive Director of Operations and Maintenance. “We look forward to inaugurating a refurbished set of locks that will provide another 50 years of dependable service to the boating public.”

Among the other navigation locks, the S-65 lock on Lake Kissimmee and the S-65A lock on the northern part of the Kissimmee River are each scheduled to be back in service by January 15.

Due to ongoing renovations, the S-65D lock – located on the Kissimmee River 16 miles north of Lake Okeechobee – is expected to be back in service by February 14. When the lock resumes operation, one gate will remain stationary for continued repairs. The lock will accommodate boats up to 13 feet wide while the affected gate is out of operation. Passage of larger boats and barges will require a 48-hour prior notice.

Built in the early 1960s by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, all four navigation locks are undergoing complete renovation for the first time. The S-61 lock, the busiest of the four, moved 2,700 boats in 2009 alone.

Each navigation lock is receiving new concrete, paint, utilities and mechanisms to operate and seal the lock gates. The locks allow boats to navigate around water control structures, providing navigation from the Upper Chain of Lakes to Lake Okeechobee. Their purpose is purely navigational, and they have no impact on water flow or flood protection.

Scheduling the renovation of all four locks at the same time saved taxpayers approximately \$480,000 in design and engineering costs. The winning bids for all four lock refurbishments totaled \$9.4 million.

The navigational lock refurbishment work is part of an ongoing effort to maintain and upgrade the infrastructure of the Central and Southern Florida Project, a massive system of flood control works authorized by the U.S. Congress in 1948. The SFWMD has established a 50-year operations and maintenance plan to ensure regular, timely maintenance of the system.

For more information about the locks, please contact the SFWMD Orlando Service Center at 407-858-6100 or the SFWMD Okeechobee Service Center at 863-462-5260.

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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.