



# NEWS RELEASE

March 22, 2011

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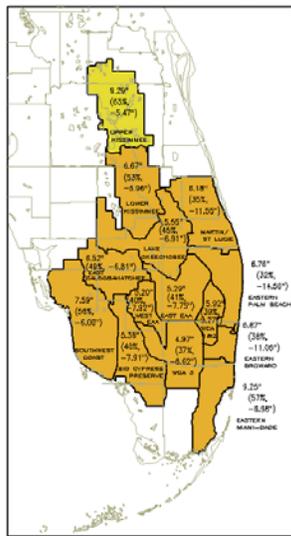
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## SFWMD Declares Water Shortage as Regional Levels Continue Falling *Residential landscape irrigation: Two days a week for all of South Florida*

SFWMD Rainfall  
02-OCT-2010 to 22-MAR-2011



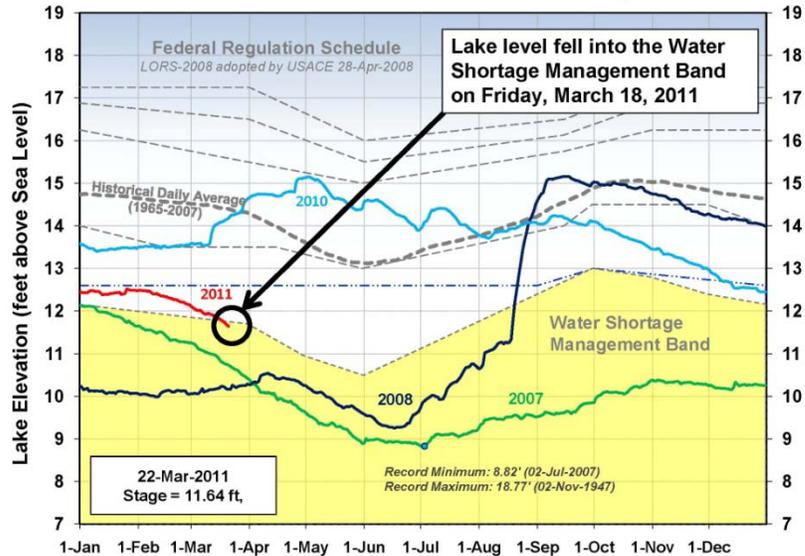
DISTRICT-WIDE: 6.64" (46%, -7.72")

DATE: 03/14/2011



2011-03-22-13:03

Lake Okeechobee Water Level Comparison



(Click on the images for larger versions.)

**West Palm Beach, FL** — With regional water levels falling and no significant rainfall forecast in the coming weeks, South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Executive Director Carol Ann Wehle signed orders declaring a water shortage in South Florida.

“During this record-breaking dry season, these actions are critical to protect our region’s water resources,” said SFWMD Executive Director Carol Ann Wehle. “This is a time for cooperation and shared adversity. The District will continue monitoring water levels to determine if additional actions are needed in the coming weeks for resource protection during the remainder of the dry season.”

Lake Okeechobee, which is the backup water supply for South Florida, hit 11.76 feet NGVD, its water shortage management zone, on Friday, March 18. Also this month, the region has received only 45 percent of its historic average rainfall through Tuesday, or 0.95 inches for a deficit of 1.18 inches. This follows the driest October-to-February period in 80 years and a dry season deficit that reached 7.72 inches as of Tuesday.

The water shortage orders, which are effective on Saturday, March 26, include:

- A two-day-a-week schedule for residential landscape irrigation throughout the District. Helping to relieve impacts on surface and groundwater sources, the order provides consistency for the District's 7.7 million residents. It is also consistent with Florida's neighboring water management districts and municipalities that are currently following a two-day watering schedule. Landscape irrigation accounts for half of all potable (drinking) water use in South Florida.
- A 15-percent cutback for all agricultural, nursery and diversion and impoundment surface water users within the Lake Okeechobee Service Area (LOSA).
- An Operational Order for District operation of certain bypass structures in the southern Indian Prairie Water Use Basin. This action is necessary to implement the LOSA cutbacks and ensure equitable distribution and delivery of water to the Seminole Tribe's Brighton Reservation pursuant to the Compact and to other users in the basin.
- A 15-percent cutback for golf course irrigation in Okeechobee, St. Lucie, Martin, Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee counties.
- Phase I water restrictions for agricultural, nursery and diversion and impoundment permittees that use or divert surface and ground water in Broward and Palm Beach counties. Withdrawals from surface waters by specified users will be reduced 15 percent, and agricultural and nursery operations will limit the hours of irrigation.
- Phase I water restrictions for agricultural and nursery water users in the southern portion of Miami-Dade County. Users will limit the times and hours of irrigation operations.
- Cisterns and low-volume irrigation systems – such as drip, bubble and micro-jet systems that apply water directly to plant root zones – may be used at any time, although voluntary reductions are encouraged. Irrigation with reclaimed water is exempt.

The District has limited or suspended operation of five navigation locks on the north shore of Lake Okeechobee due to declining water levels in the lake and lock chambers. Lock tenders will not be on duty at locks that are closed.

### **Low Rainfall and Current Conditions**

March continues a dry trend that began with a record rainfall deficit in October 2010, which signaled an early start to the 2010-2011 dry season along with moderate-strength La Niña conditions. La Niña is a weather phenomenon that often generates below-average rainfall during the dry season.

From October through February, the District's 16-county region received a total of 5.69 inches, less than half the average rainfall for that five-month period, or 6.54 inches below average. Eastern Palm Beach County faced the biggest deficit during that period with a shortfall of 12.53 inches, or only 32 percent of its average rainfall.

Lake Okeechobee is more than two feet below the historical average for this time of year. Lake levels are expected to dramatically decline as temperatures rise and evapotranspiration rates increase.

Links to information about irrigation limits by area, current conditions and water-savings tips are available at [www.sfwmd.gov/waterwatch](http://www.sfwmd.gov/waterwatch).

### **Water Shortage Orders:**

- [Two-Day Landscape Irrigation and Golf Course Order](#)
- [Lake Okeechobee Service Area Order](#)
- [Broward and Palm Beach Order](#)
- [Bypass Structure Order](#)
- [South Dade Order](#)



### **More information is available at:**

- [SFWMD Weather/Rainfall Data](#)
- [National Weather Service Dry Season Forecast](#)
- [Climate Prediction Center FAQ on La Niña](#)
- [Climate Prediction Center Precipitation Forecast](#)

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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.*