



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE



May 3, 2012

CONTACTS:

Gabe Margasak

South Florida Water Management District

Office: (561) 682-2800 or Cellular: (561) 670-1245

Robert Molleda

National Weather Service

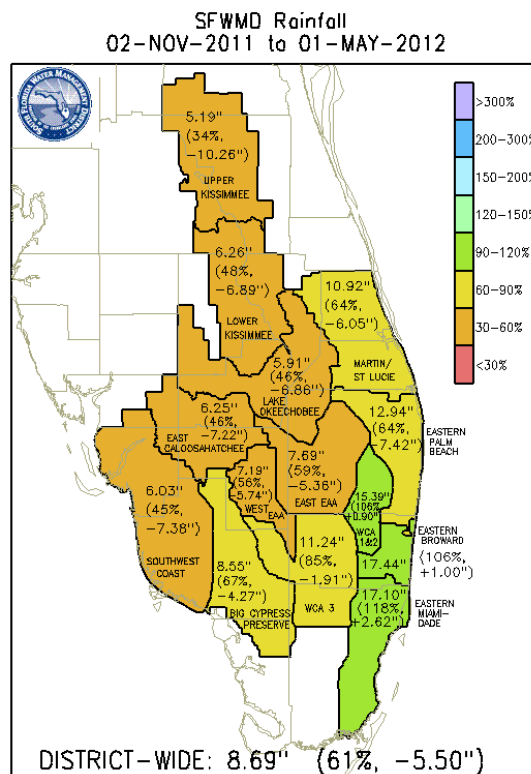
Office: (305) 299-4522, ext. 223

www.sfwmd.gov/news

follow us on **twitter**

SFWMD, NWS: Dry Conditions Are Expected to Improve With Arrival of Wet Season

Water conservation remains critical to protect regional water resources



(Dry Season Overview: Click on the map for a larger version.)

West Palm Beach, FL — South Florida's dry conditions are likely to improve with a wet season that is forecast to be average, but it will take time to build on April's rainfall to

recharge regional surface and groundwater sources, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and the National Weather Service reported at a joint briefing today.

“We still have portions of the District that are below average for rainfall, and May’s typically high evaporation rates and long days with lots of sun mean water levels can fall rapidly,” said Susan Sylvester, Chief of the Water Control Operations Bureau. “Rainfall is the primary source of recharge and an average wet season will help water managers balance flood control, water supply and the health of the natural system for 7.7 million residents and the environment.”

Released today, the National Weather Service’s 2012 wet season forecast calls for:

- Probable early and wetter start to the wet season
- Precipitation outlook for near to above normal precipitation into June, with near normal precipitation for the remainder of the season
- Slightly above normal temperatures

(NWS: Summer outlooks have a lower degree of confidence than winter outlooks in South Florida.)

Current Conditions

April’s rainfall District-wide was 3.36 inches, or 133 percent of the historical average, providing important recharge. Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade counties, along with the Big Cypress Basin all received above-average rainfall for the month. Southwest Florida, Martin and St. Lucie counties and the Kissimmee received near average rainfall.

Overall, however, the region is still in a rainfall deficit of about 5.50 inches for the dry season that began in November. Southwest Florida and the Kissimmee regions have been significantly drier with higher rainfall deficits. Lake Okeechobee, the backup water supply for Florida’s lower east coast, is at 11.68 feet NGVD. This is 1.87 feet below average for this time of year.

This means residents from Orlando to the Florida Keys remain under a water shortage warning that calls for practicing voluntary water conservation and following landscape irrigation limits. Links to information about irrigation limits by area, current conditions and water-savings tips are available at www.sfwmd.gov/waterwatch.

Wet Season Preparation: Maintenance and Keeping the Flow Going

Structural maintenance and upgrades, accomplished primarily during the dry season, are critical to ensuring that the regional flood control system of more than 1,600 miles of canals and 1,000 miles of levees and berms operates at optimal capacity. During the past five years, the District has invested \$240 million in essential maintenance work, including:

- Hardening and overhauling pump stations
- Overhauling gated spillways
- Replacing project culverts
- Dredging canals
- Stabilizing canal banks
- Enhancing Stormwater Treatment Areas

The District is also set to conduct its annual “Hurricane Freddy” exercise as part of the agency’s emergency operations readiness for hurricane season.

South Florida Wet Season Facts

- On average, South Florida’s wet season begins around May 20 and ends around October 13, lasting for about 21 weeks.
- Typically, about two-thirds of annual rains fall during the wet season, or approximately 35 inches out of 52 inches.
- Since 1932, virtually all wet seasons have produced 2 to 4 feet of rainfall.
- June is usually South Florida’s wettest month.
- The wet season has three general phases:
 - Memorial Day weekend through July 4 weekend, which are typically the wettest six weeks of the year.
 - Early July through mid August, which are hotter and often drier.
 - Late August through October, which are characterized by highly variable rainfall mainly due to tropical activity and cold fronts.

More information is available at:

- [Landscape Irrigation Days and Times by County](#)
- [SFWMD Weather/Rainfall Data](#)
- [Climate Prediction Center Precipitation Forecast](#)

#

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.