

MEMORANDUM

TO: Tommy Strowd, Director, Operations, Maintenance & Construction Division
Terrie Bates, Director, Water Resources Division

FROM: Susan Sylvester, Chief, Water Control Operations Bureau
Linda Lindstrom, Chief, Applied Science Bureau
Dean Powell, Chief, Water Supply Bureau

DATE: September 19, 2012

SUBJECT: Operational Position Statement for the Week of September 18-24, 2012

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is responsible for managing Lake Okeechobee water levels and makes operational decisions about whether to retain water or release water based on their regulation schedule release guidance. The USACE makes this decision taking into account the best available science and data provided by its staff and a variety of partners, which includes the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD).

The SFWMD team has discussed the system wide environmental conditions, the water supply conditions, and has evaluated the overall status of the water management system. Detailed reports are available at the SFWMD's [Operational Planning](#) internet page.

Recommendation to the USACE

With current Lake stages rising and within a foot of the Intermediate Subband of the 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (2008 LORS), the SFWMD recommends that the USACE follow the 2008 LORS release guidance, which currently suggests releases up to 4000 cfs at S-77 and up to 1800 cfs at S-80. The SFWMD does not have a more specific release recommendation for the USACE.

Weather and Climate

Rainfall during the past week (Sep 11 – Sep 18) totaled 1.63 inches district wide (through 7 am September 18th). About 1.56 inches of rain fell directly over Lake Okeechobee during the past 7-days. During the past 30 days district-wide rainfall has been about 153% of average. The current (16-Aug) CPC outlook currently shows slightly increased chances of above normal rainfall for the October-December period.

Current Conditions and Operations

The September 17, 2012 Lake Okeechobee stage (reported by the USACE on Sep 18th) was 15.11 feet NGVD, about 0.30 feet higher than the previous week. The Lake is 2.92 feet higher than it was a month ago and is 4.18 feet higher than it was a year ago. The current stage is about 0.49 feet higher than the historical average for this date. The Lake stage is in the Low Sub-band of the 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (2008 LORS) and is within 0.7 feet of the Intermediate Sub-band.

Recent Caloosahatchee Basin (C-43 Basin) runoff, as measured at S-79, has ranged from 3100-3900 cfs and is relatively steady. Recent St. Lucie Basin (C-44 Basin) runoff, as measured at S-80, has ranged from 250-480 cfs and is decreasing. Estuary salinities are relatively low due to freshwater inflows.

The LORS-2008 release guidance suggests no releases to the WCAs; such releases are not desirable due to relatively high stages in the WCAs. All WCA stages are above their respective regulation schedules. With the Lake O stage in the Low sub-band and within one-foot of the Intermediate sub-band, the LORS-2008 release guidance suggests releases at S-77 up to 4000 cfs, and at S-80 up to 1800 cfs.

Note that the 2008 LORS release guidance currently suggests releases larger than Baseflow releases (Baseflow releases are up to 3000 cfs at S-79, and up to 1170 cfs at S-80cfs). Therefore the SFWMD's Lake Okeechobee Adaptive Protocol release guidance is currently not applicable. The Adaptive Protocol release guidance was designed primarily to determine appropriate baseflow releases and environmental water supply deliveries to the Caloosahatchee Estuary.

For additional information pertaining to operations history and past recommendations, refer to the archive of operational position statements at www.sfwmd.gov under the Operational Planning topic.