



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

OPERATIONS UPDATE

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Re: SFWMD Emergency Operations in Water Conservation Area 3

To relieve flooding and dire conditions impacting Everglades wildlife, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) today opened water control gates to move water out of Water Conservation Area 3 (WCA-3).

Maximizing gate openings at the S-333 structure along the Tamiami Trail will allow about 10,000 gallons of clean water a second to flow south from the WCA into Northeast Shark River Slough in Everglades National Park.

The WCA, spanning Broward and Miami-Dade counties, has been inundated with record rainfall, including:

- The wettest January on record since recordkeeping began in 1932
- The wettest November through January, the first half of the dry season, since recordkeeping began in 1932
- 6-8 inches of rain directly over the WCA in one 24-hour period in January

This record rainfall and increased stormwater flows into the wetland resulted in the WCA rapidly rising to its highest level since 1994. The current level is approximately 11.41 feet, which is more than a foot too high.

At this extremely high level, wildlife loses critical food sources and safe habitat and cannot survive prolonged flooding conditions.

Emergency gate operations will lower the WCA level as rapidly and as safely as possible. The rate at which water levels fall is highly dependent upon daily rainfall.

Once the level becomes safe for wildlife, water managers will once again have flexibility to move water south from Lake Okeechobee, through water-cleaning wetlands, and into the Water Conservation Areas, helping to protect the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries.

Daily water levels in WCA-3 are available at:

- [SFWMD WCA-3 Water Level Daily Report](#)

The SFWMD is also taking action to protect urban and agricultural areas bordering the increased flows to Shark River Slough. This includes connecting the Richmond Drive Seepage Collection Canal at Southwest 168th Street to the C-357 Canal.

This will provide additional protection for the area just west of the L-31 North Canal in Miami-Dade County's 8.5 Square Mile Area.

The SFWMD's action follows the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission orders that allowed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to ease regulatory restrictions on operations to make this speedy response possible. This followed a request from Governor Rick Scott to the Corps.

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The South Florida Water Management District is a regional governmental agency that manages water resources in the southern part of the state. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts.

Our mission is to protect South Florida's water resources by balancing and improving flood control, water supply, water quality and natural systems.