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Jacksonville District

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Army Corps of Engineers, SFWMD to begin aerial treatment of Lake Okeechobee floating vegetation on January 5

LAKE OKEECHOBEE, FLA. -- Beginning Monday, January 5, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) in cooperation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) will begin aerial treatments of water lettuce and water hyacinths, two invasive exotic plants, on roughly 1,000 acres of Lake Okeechobee.

Although there has been a consistent presence of six to 12 boats spraying for water lettuce and water hyacinth on the Lake in recent weeks, the rapid rise in water levels after Tropical Storm Fay over-stimulated the germination and proliferation process of the aquatic plants. They have spread over a vast area, primarily along the lakeward edge of the marsh and in some interior marshes. These dense patches of vegetation can prevent growth of other desirable native vegetation, as well as inhibiting boat traffic.

The interagency teams plan to aerially treat 1,000 acres in places where solid bands of the exotic plants exist. At present, the areas to be treated extend from mid-Observation Shoal northward along the outside marsh, with some treatments extending along the north and eastern shores of the lake as well.



This aerial treatment is considered the safest and most efficient way to gain control of the rapidly growing non-native floating vegetation on Lake Okeechobee. This measure, along with the continued treatment by boat and airboat of an additional 500 acres, will limit the expansion of these exotic, invasive weeds.

For additional information contact Jon Morton, Biologist, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Clewiston, FL 863-983-8101.

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