

Weekly Update: February 22, 2006



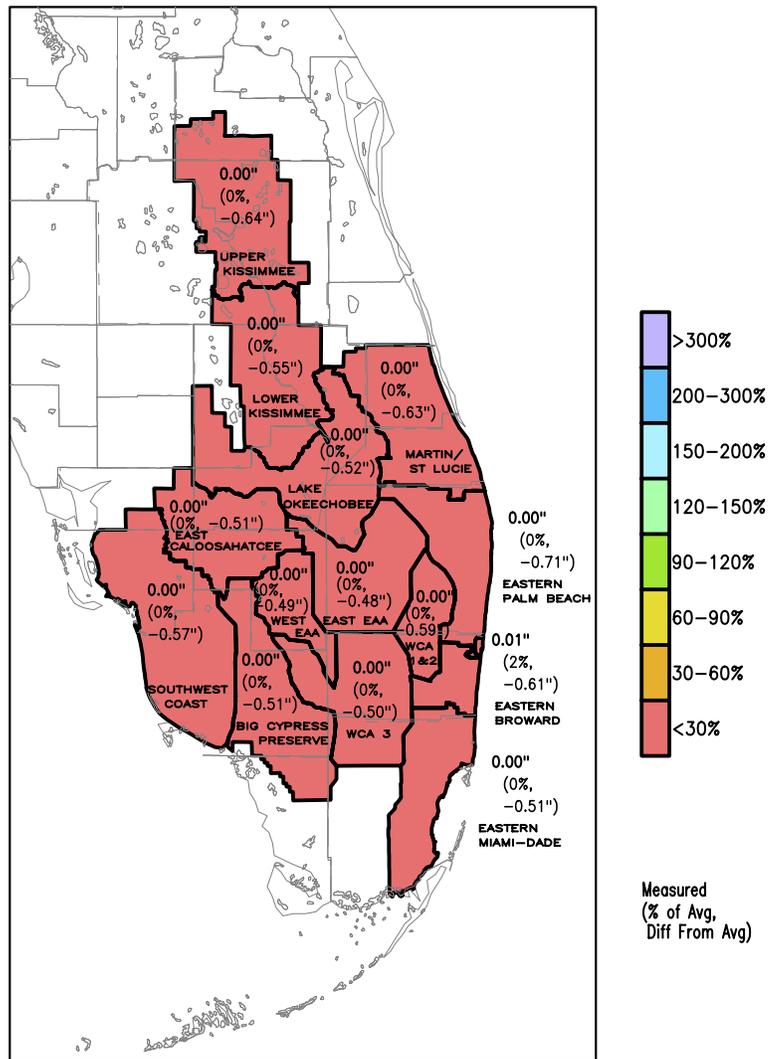
just the
FACTs

This fact sheet is provided as a reference to encourage a greater understanding of the various issues related to managing water in south Florida.

State of the Water Management System

To underscore our commitment to keep you informed, we will send this update weekly. We encourage you to share this water resources information with your constituents.

SFWM District Rainfall
15-FEB-2006 to 21-FEB-2006



DISTRICT-WIDE: 0.00" (0%, -0.55")

GRADS: COLA/IGES

2006-02-21-19:02



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Rainfall overview:

- District-wide rainfall for the past week was zero.
- The rainfall outlook for the next 7 days is for below average rainfall.

State of the Water Management System

Weekly Update: February 22, 2006 (page 2)

System-wide overview:

Rainfall over the last week totaled 0.00 District-wide. The total for the first 20 days of the month is 2.69 in or 172% of average. The forecast for the next 14 days is for below average rainfall.

Lake Okeechobee — The Lake stage is approximately 15.50 ft NGVD. Turbidity remains high, and stage levels continue to be too high for the lake's ecological health. The wading bird surveys being done in other parts of the ecosystem have been extended this year to include Lake Okeechobee. January wading bird surveys indicated a total of four small colonies -- two great blue heron colonies in the Moore Haven marsh and two great blue and great egret colonies on Eagle Bay Island. In total, 54 nests, most with eggs and some with fledglings were counted.

Upper Chain of Lakes/Kissimmee Basin — In the last seven days, there was no rainfall in the upper basin. Most of the upper basin lakes have stages that are near regulation schedule. Lake Kissimmee is approximately 0.70 ft below schedule. A substantial portion of restored floodplain is still inundated, but the periphery is mostly dry except for depressions. Snail kites engaged in courtship behavior over Lake Toho last week. The following were observed from an aerial survey on Feb. 17.

- Large numbers of wading birds (white ibis, small white heron, great egret, some glossy ibis and wood stork) in the restored area. Individual flocks were not excessively large, but small foraging groups were widely distributed
- Moderate to high numbers of waterfowl in the restored area and some depressions that are peripheral to the floodplain, mainly mottled duck but also some blue-winged teal
- Two immature bald eagles sighted in restored area
- Large flocks of shorebirds widely distributed along both restored area and remnant wetlands in unrestored area

St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries — A level one pulse release began at S-80 on Feb. 16 and will end on Feb 25 (St. Lucie). A modified level one pulse release began at S-77 on Feb 16 and will end on Feb 25 (Caloosahatchee). Salinity conditions in both estuaries are good.

Water Conservation Areas — It has now been two weeks since the last major reversal and recession rates have improved in some places but not in others.

- WCA-1, declined slightly, has about a foot of water in it, and is at regulation.
- WCA-2A water depths increased by 0.08 ft this past week, has 0.69 ft of water and is above regulation.
- WCA-2B has 3.4 ft of water (too deep for foraging by wading birds).
- WCA-3A is below regulation and average depth is about 1.88 ft.
- WCA-3B depths continue to increase slightly in the north and decrease in the south. This hydrologic gradient within WCA-3B is approx. 0.39 ft (an increase of 0.12 ft from last week).

* SFWMD water managers and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers work together to manage Lake Okeechobee. Water releases from the lake are made in accordance with a federally authorized regulation schedule based on many factors such as time of year, current water conditions, predicted rainfall and lake level.

State of the Water Management System

Weekly Update: February 22, 2006 (page 3)

Everglades National Park — Water levels decreased everywhere. The recession was highest at the Taylor Slough Bridge (down almost 3 inches). Water levels were also down at the Taylor River spoonbill foraging site. Compared to recent weeks where wind was a major driver of water in/out of south Everglades creeks, this week's drop of more than 2 inches was a result of evapotranspiration and regional hydrology.

Note: This rainfall information is based on rain gauges within the Park. The map on page one captures District rain gauge data only.

Florida Bay — Salinity remains near seasonal levels across Florida Bay. With only the light wind last week, there was little change in concentrations at most stations.

Other District News and Happenings — A celebration of the launch of the Acceler8 C-43 West Storage Reservoir Project scheduled for this Friday at Berry Groves on SR 80 at 9:30 a.m. The C-43 test cells will provide valuable data for design of the Acceler8 C-43 West Storage Reservoir Project, which consists of an above-ground reservoir located along the Caloosahatchee River that will capture and store regulatory water releases from Lake Okeechobee, reducing the number and volume of harmful discharges to the coastal estuaries. The project is a component of a larger restoration project for the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary.