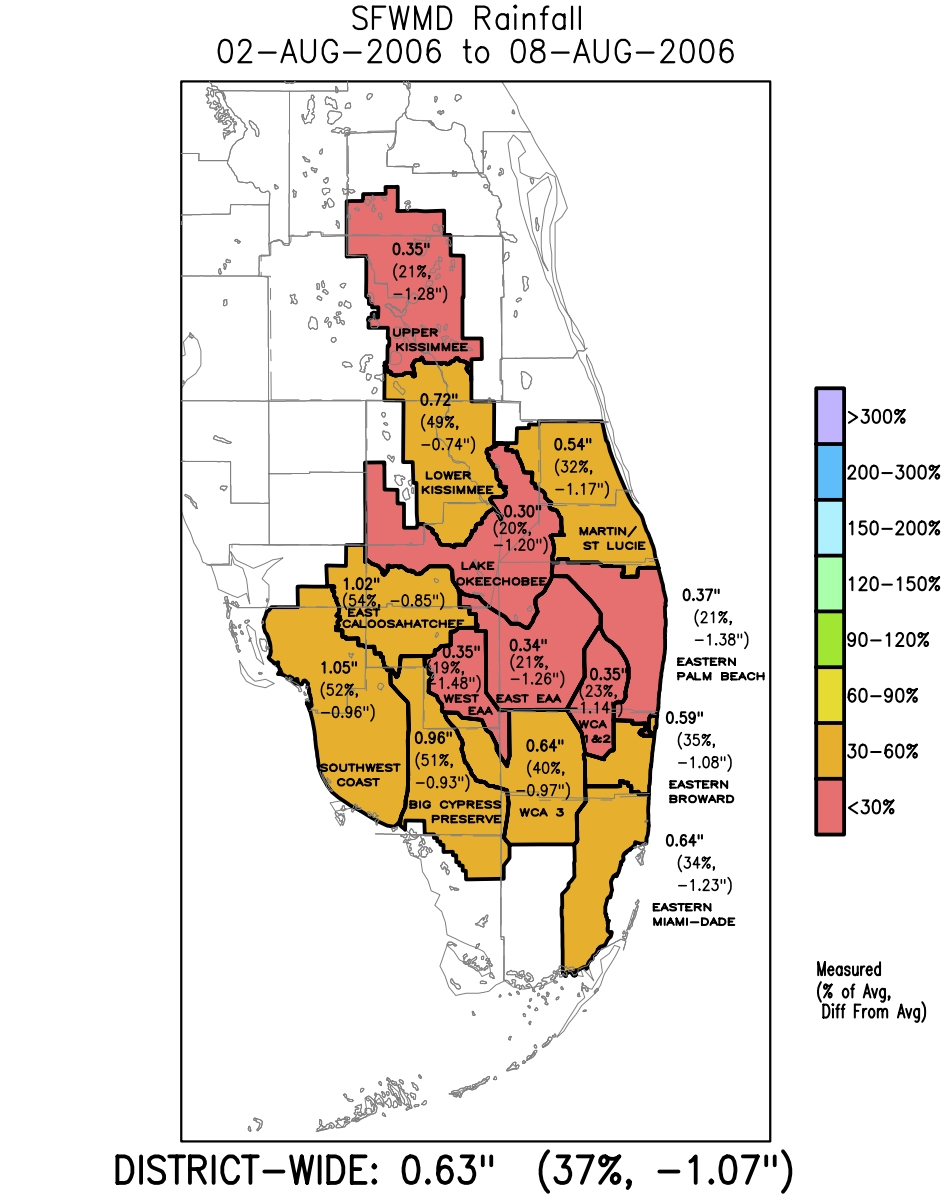
Weekly Update: August 9, 2006

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.



Rainfall overview:

- District-wide rainfall for the past week was less than ¾ of an inch.
- The rainfall outlook for the next seven days is for below average rainfall.

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System-wide overview:

District-wide rainfall was approximately 0.8 inches, which is below average. Most of the recent rainfall was received in the western part of the District. The 30-day rainfall average is 6.11 inches (91% of normal). The Kissimmee valley is experiencing the driest conditions since 1956. Rainfall is predicted to be below average for the next seven days.

Currently, water levels in WCA-2B are increasing at a rate that is disproportionate to the rest of the Everglades, although environmental conditions in WCA-2B remain good. On the other hand, WCA-2A is not increasing at a rate expected for the wet season and a more balanced water condition is needed.

Lake Okeechobee — The lake stage is approximately 12.16 feet NGVD 29 (10.86 feet NAVD 88), down 0.1 feet since last week and 4.0 feet lower than this date last year.* Comprehensive mapping of submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) along the entire near-shore region is ongoing with 113 sites having been sampled as of this report. Out of the 113 sites, 69 of the sites had adequate light reaching the bottom. Additionally, 55 of the sites had values indicating full-light penetration to the bottom.

Upper Chain of Lakes/Kissimmee Basin — During the last seven days, 0.46 inches of rainfall fell over the upper basin and 0.57 inches fell over the lower basin. In the upper basin, all lakes remain below regulation schedule. In most of the upper basin lakes, stage is starting to drop because of below average rainfall and losses caused by relatively high summertime rates of evapotranspiration. For several weeks, low discharges of approximately 450 cubic feet per second for the Kissimmee River Restoration Project have been made by matching releases from Lake Toho to those from Lake Kissimmee. At certain times, downstream releases for environmental purposes are allowed for the Kissimmee River-Lake Istokpoga Basin. By matching releases from Lake Toho to those from Lake Kissimmee, water can be discharged to the Kissimmee River without continuing to lower Lakes Cypress, Hatchineha, and Kissimmee, which are near the low stage. Because of decreasing stages in Lake Toho, discharges at both structures have been cut back. Despite low water levels, reports continue that Lakes Cypress, Hatchineha, and Kissimmee are in good condition. Snail kite nesting continues in Lake Toho. The concentration of dissolved oxygen in the restored river channel remains above thresholds of concern. Water levels in the Kissimmee River continue to be low.

St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries — In the St. Lucie Estuary, there was one day of discharge at S-80 last week resulting in a weekly average of 16 cubic feet per second. Weekly average salinity at both monitoring sites was within the preferred range. In the Caloosahatchee Estuary, discharge at S-79 averaged 468 cubic feet per second over the past week. The 30-day average discharge at S-79 is 1,086 cubic feet per second and within the preferred range. Freshwater extends downstream to the I-75 Bridge. Tape grass beds in the upper estuary have experienced weekly average salinities and within established tolerance limits. Weekly average salinity at Cape Coral and Shell Point increased during the past week. Salinity in both estuaries is good.

** 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.*

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Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) — Stage and depths declined across the system for a second week due to the lack of rain. WCA-1 and 2 received 0.3 – 0.4 inches, and WCA-3 and the Park received about 0.9 inches. WCA-1 declined by about 0.1 foot. WCA-2A declined the most of any region (0.28 feet). The northeast region of WCA-3A, with flows from the S-11s and STAs, was the only region where the rehydration rate was good. The rest of WCA-3A and 3B receded by about 0.5 inches. Northeast Shark River Slough receded by about 1.0 inch. WCA-1 is slightly below regulation, WCA-2 is at regulation and WCA-3 is in the lower transition of the regulation schedule.

Everglades National Park — Rainfall accumulations were low again this week in the Park. With little rainfall and very high temperatures continuing to fuel evaporation, water levels dropped again this week across the Park wetlands. Water level at Taylor Slough Bridge showed the largest decline, with 5.75 inches for the week. Both Shark River Slough and the panhandle saw a drop in stage of just over 1.5 inches during the seven-day period.

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 trends in Florida Bay were mixed this week, and rainfall accumulations were low. Salinity showed a general decline at Trout Creek again this week, but there were notable spikes in the last few days due to movement of Bay water up from the south. Flow from the Everglades seems to have affected salinity at the Lake Madeira Bay mouth where salinity dropped again this week. Salinity also remained low at the Taylor River mouth platform and in the Shark River Slough outflow at Tarpon Bay. Salinity concentrations in Terrapin Bay and just upstream in McCormick Creek continued to slowly decline, but salinity upstream in the Taylor River ponds remained nearly the same for the past week.

Biscayne Bay — Salinity conditions decreased overall in Biscayne Bay from June 16 through July 15. This was associated with rainfall and canal discharge in eastern Miami-Dade County, which were both higher than the previous month. Daily rainfall ranged from 0 – 1.2 inches, with a cumulative rainfall of 9.7 inches (4 inches more than the previous 31 days). During this period, day-to-day salinity changed little at each station. Salinity conditions in Manatee Bay are higher than conditions at this time of year in 2005, but slightly lower than those observed in 2004.

Keetch-Byram drought index — This is used by the Florida Division of Forestry to indicate soil dryness. The scale ranges from zero (no moisture deficit) to 800, which means moisture is not found for eight inches below the soil. It is based on daily rainfall and temperature measurements, and increases for each day without rainfall. High values of the KBDI are an indication that conditions are favorable for the occurrence and spread of wildfires. The index can be viewed at http://www.fl-dof.com/fire_weather/KBDI/. The Aug. 9 KBDI average for the District's 16 counties is 334 – an increase of 31 points since last week – with a minimum of 1 in Charlotte, Collier, Hendry, Lee and Monroe counties and a maximum of 722 in Orange County.

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Other District News and Happenings —

- Construction began on the 16,000-acre EAA reservoir with the groundbreaking conducted by Governor Bush, House Council on Environmental Quality Chairman James Connaughton, Congressman Mark Foley, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Jacksonville District Commander Col. Paul Grosskruger and Governing Board Chair Kevin McCarty. This reservoir, which will hold 62 billion gallons of water, will provide alternative storage for water out of Lake Okeechobee providing relief for the Herbert Hoover Dike, and for the estuaries of the Caloosahatchee River in Lee County and the St. Lucie River Estuary in Martin County. This key project is being constructed ahead of schedule through the District's *Acceler8* program, which moves several important Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program projects to construction, on average, a decade earlier than their original schedules. This is achieved through advanced land acquisition, a stepped-up pace for design and taking advantage of low interest rates and borrowed funds to support these earlier efforts.

- At their Aug. 9 meeting, the Governing Board authorized the documents necessary to issue up to $600,000,000 in "certificates of participation" to fund the construction of the EAA reservoir and the expansions of stormwater treatment areas (STAs) B and C. These later two projects will provide 18,000 additional acres of STAs, which will allow for significantly enhanced water quality treatment. These STAs are designed to work in conjunction with the EAA reservoir. With this combination of projects there will be a significantly enhanced ability to store and then clean great volumes of water that will ultimately be fed south into the everglades where it and when it is needed.

- Work on Phase IVA of Kissimmee River Restoration Project continues. This phase of the project involves removing the demonstration project weirs from the C-38 Canal, backfilling 1.5 miles of C-38 Canal and extending the reconnected river channel upstream by approximately four miles. As of July 31, construction for this project will interrupt navigation on the Kissimmee River between the Avon Park Air Force Range and two miles south of Weir #1 for a period of 18 months.

Did you know? The South Florida Water Management District manages and protects the water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply. Want to hear more? It would be our pleasure to meet with your organization to give a presentation and answer your questions. If interested, please contact Doris Urban at 800-432-2045 or 561-686-8800, ext. 6202.