

Weekly Update: August 24, 2005



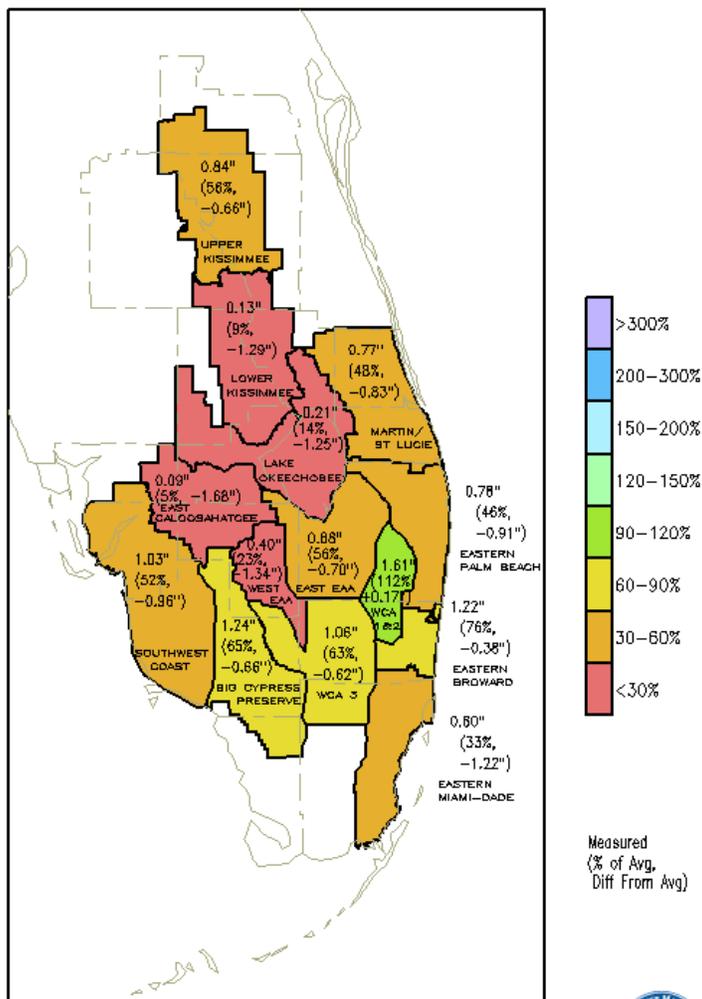
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FACTS

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.

SFWMD Rainfall
17-AUG-2005 to 23-AUG-2005



DISTRICT-WIDE: 0.74" (45%, -0.92")

GRADS: COLA/IGES



Rainfall overview:

- District-wide rainfall for the last week was less than 1".
- Rainfall total for August (to date) is 4.4", slightly below average.
- Rainfall for the next 3-7 days is expected to be above average, as Tropical Storm Katrina moves toward Florida. District-wide rainfall average is expected to be 4-5", with some areas seeing 6-12".
- The forecasted rains could produce a 1½ –2 ft rise in Lake Okeechobee, potentially requiring increased water releases.



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State of the Water Management System

Weekly Update: August 24, 2005 (page 2)

System-wide overview:

In response to the forecast for heavy rains in the next several days, the District is operating under a pre-storm configuration. This means canals in the lower East Coast are being adjusted to accommodate large amounts of stormwater runoff. Canal levels are at low range (pre-storm) levels. Secondary systems, such as city and county canals, will gain capacity by moving water into the District's canals before the storm.

Structures in the Homestead area and the South Miami-Dade conveyance system were opened Tuesday night to prepare for the anticipated rainfall. Flood control enhancement projects added to the C-4 system in the last 18 months are being utilized to reduce the potential for flooding in locations such as Sweetwater, West Miami and Flagami—areas that historically have seen flooding events from similar storms.

A status report on the 16-county South Florida Water Management District system shows all facilities, such as pumping station, flood control gates and field station communications, are 100% operational. Field crews are getting assignments for 24-hour operations and are following procedures of filling fuel tanks for extended operations and preparing for round-the-clock recovery efforts, should they be needed.

Algae Update: Blue-green algae blooms continue to persist this week in Lake Okeechobee, the St. Lucie River/Estuary, the Caloosahatchee River, the C-51 Canal in West Palm Beach and a light bloom in the Upper Kissimmee Chain of Lakes. This species of blue-green algae (*Mycrocystis*) are not typically toxic but can form toxic strains. The District has taken action to coordinate monitoring, evaluation and response efforts with state and local agencies, including Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and Department of Health.

Beginning Aug. 22, the District also implemented an expanded blue-green algae toxin monitoring program, increasing sampling locations and frequency throughout the District. Samples will be collected at 41 stations every two weeks from May to October, and every month from November to April. The District also established an internal Blue-Green Algae Task Force to coordinate agency activities and response.

Lake Okeechobee — The lake level continued on a downward trend this week, measuring 15.75 ft NGVD as of August 23rd. This is down 0.29 ft from last week's level. Heavy rainfall forecast for the next few days may impact the rate of releases from the lake.*

Widespread surface algal blooms continue to be reported from a variety of locations. No changes were reported in water clarity: the southern part of the lake has some clarity, with low clarity in the north and west sections.

Results from the annual mapping of submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) are complete. There were 10,872 acres of sparse vegetation recorded (see map, below), compared to 54,000 acres of mostly moderate to dense SAV in the lake at the same time last year. Most of the vegetation found this year was Hydrilla and Ceratophyllum.

* *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: August 24, 2005 (page 3)

Upper Chain of Lakes/Kissimmee Basin — Stages for most upper basin lakes are at or below regulation schedules. Some lakes are slightly above schedule. River temperature is still high. Hydrilla treatment continues on some lakes.

St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries — Salinity remains low, and conditions are poor. Lake discharges make up 70 percent or more of the flow into the estuaries. Seagrass height, density and coverage at one monitoring site in the St. Lucie's Indian River Lagoon were below the normal summer conditions.

Water Conservation Areas — Water levels are above regulation schedule in WCA-2A and WCA-3A and are slightly below regulation schedule in WCA-1.

Everglades National Park — Rainfall averaged about 1" but was a high as 3" in some locations. Water depths increased slightly in Shark River Slough (by less than 0.1 ft), with slight declines in water level at the Taylor Slough bridge and the Park's panhandle section.

Note: Rainfall information in the park is based on radar estimates, not rain gauge data. As a result, the map on page one does not include rainfall information for the park.

Florida Bay — A second week of light rainfall (as low as 0.25") and high evaporation has contributed to rising salinity concentrations in the bay, especially in interior regions.

Summary of 2005 Annual Mapping of Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) in Lake Okeechobee

