

Lake Okeechobee Service Area Water Availability Rule Development Update

*Water Resource Advisory Committee
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Problem Statement

Water availability from Lake Okeechobee being affected by several factors:

- **Revised Lake regulation schedule (LORS) impacts:**
 - **Lake Okeechobee Minimum Flow and Level (MFL) performance**
 - **Level of certainty of users (greater water shortages)**
- **Renewal of all Lake Okeechobee Service Area (LOSA) irrigation permits scheduled to begin in October (~700,000 acres)**
- **Evolving Everglades restoration vision**
- **Shifting/new demands for Lake water occurring**

Problem Statement, cont.

Are existing consumptive use permit rules when applied to uses within the Lake Okeechobee Service Area adequate to achieve:

- Protection of existing legal use rights?
- Environmental protection/enhancement of the natural system?
- Making water available for reasonable beneficial uses?

Objectives of the WRAC Issues Workshops

- Develop a common understanding of the various demands for surface water within LOSA
- Explore the existing consumptive permit rules, strengths and limitations to address potentially competing demands for water within LOSA
- Exchange ideas on ways to deal with competing demands for water supply within LOSA
- Assist staff in the development of rule language

Goal of the Rule Development

Develop consumptive use regulatory criteria for Lake Okeechobee surface waters:

- Consistent with revised Lake regulation schedule
- Consistent with agency objectives for protection & enhancement of natural systems
- Provides criteria for renewal of existing agricultural projects for 20 years
- Limit the expansion of water uses that are inconsistent with the variations of Lake quantity and quality (such as drinking water supply)

Products

Draft rule language for Governing Board consideration addressing:

- **Water use permit criteria for allocation of Lake water within the Lake Okeechobee basin**
- **Impacts to the Lake MFL**
 - **Develop a Lake MFL recovery plan**
 - **Update 40E-8 F.A.C. (MFL rule)**

Process/Schedule

- Rule language and MFL recovery plan drafted
 - Section 3.2.1. of the Basis of Review
 - 40E-8 (F.A.C.) Minimum Flows and Levels
 - Appendix H LECRWSP 2005 (revised)
- First workshop on draft rule held (3/3/08)
- Status report to March WRAC and Governing Board
- Outreach to user community/finalize rule draft
- Seek Governing Board authorization to publish rule by May / June 2008
- Begin water use permit renewals in October 2008