

Rainfall overview:

- District-wide rainfall for the past week was 0.29 inches.
- The rainfall outlook for the next seven days is for below average rainfall.

System-wide overview:

High pressure will likely keep rainfall away from the eastern and southeastern parts of Florida until into the weekend. Small showers may appear as early as Saturday to the south and east of Lake Okeechobee, but no significant rainfall will occur across the District during the next week. The rainfall outlook for the next seven days is for below average rainfall.

Lake Okeechobee:

With persistent dry conditions, Lake Okeechobee continues to decline and is 11.32 feet NGVD 29 (10.02 feet NAVD 88), 0.19 feet lower since this date last week and 0.55 feet lower than one month ago. Of particular concern, the lake stage is more than 4 feet below the historical average for this time of year. Phase I (15 percent cutbacks) water restrictions are still in effect in the Lake Okeechobee Service Area, which primarily affects agricultural users. The currently authorized Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule calls for a move to Phase II (30 percent cutbacks) restrictions when lake levels decline to 11 feet NGVD 29. At this time, the lake is projected to reach that level in early March. Lake monitoring for algal blooms was postponed for a week due to windy conditions. Bulrush densities seem stable, but a continued drop in water level could impact growth.

Upper Chain of Lakes/Kissimmee Basin:

The upper basin received 0.4-0.8 inches of rain during the past seven days, and the lower basin received 0.4-0.6 inches. In most lakes, water levels have been fairly stable, still below schedule for this time of year. Water releases continue at structure S-57 to lakes Hart and Mary Jane, but no other releases are being made in the system. No flow conditions in the Kissimmee River have existed for 104 days.

St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries:

In the St. Lucie Estuary, salinities readings were within the preferred range at all monitoring sites, and salinity conditions are good. In the Caloosahatchee Estuary, a four-day release to flush chlorides from the Olga Water Treatment Plant intakes ended on February 14. This release also lowered salinity in the downstream estuary. Salinity conditions are fair to good in the upper Caloosahatchee Estuary and good in the Lower Estuary and San Carlos Bay.

Water Conservation Areas (WCAs):

Rainfall in the WCAs ranged from 0.14 to 0.24 inches. Reports from WCA-2A, the northern sections of WCA-1 and the northeast section of WCA-3A indicate wading bird use. Since November, WCA-1 and WCA-3 continue to be below the regulation schedule, while WCA-2A remains above the regulation schedule.

Everglades National Park:

Rainfall amounts were above average in the Park, and water levels increased as a result.

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

Florida Bay:

For the second week, the heaviest rainfall across the Everglades this week was received in Florida Bay. Salinity fluctuated throughout the week.

Area Water Restrictions:

Mandatory Phase 1 water restrictions remain in force for the Lake Okeechobee Service Area as well as the Northern Indian Prairie Basin, which comprise the

Everglades Agricultural Area, portions of Hendry, Glades, Lee, Okeechobee, Palm Beach and Martin Counties, as well as agricultural areas to the south of Lake Istokpoga in Highlands County.

A formal water shortage warning remains in place for the District's Lower East Coast Service Area, which comprises Monroe, Miami-Dade, Broward and eastern Palm Beach Counties.

For additional information, area residents are encouraged to call the District's toll-free Water Conservation Hotline at 1-800-662-8876 or contact their regional service center. Helpful water conservation tips are available at <http://www.sfwmd.gov/site/index.php?id=52>

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 Niki Spencer at 800-432-2045 or 561-686-8800, ext. 6004.

** 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.*