

Weekly Update: September 21, 2005



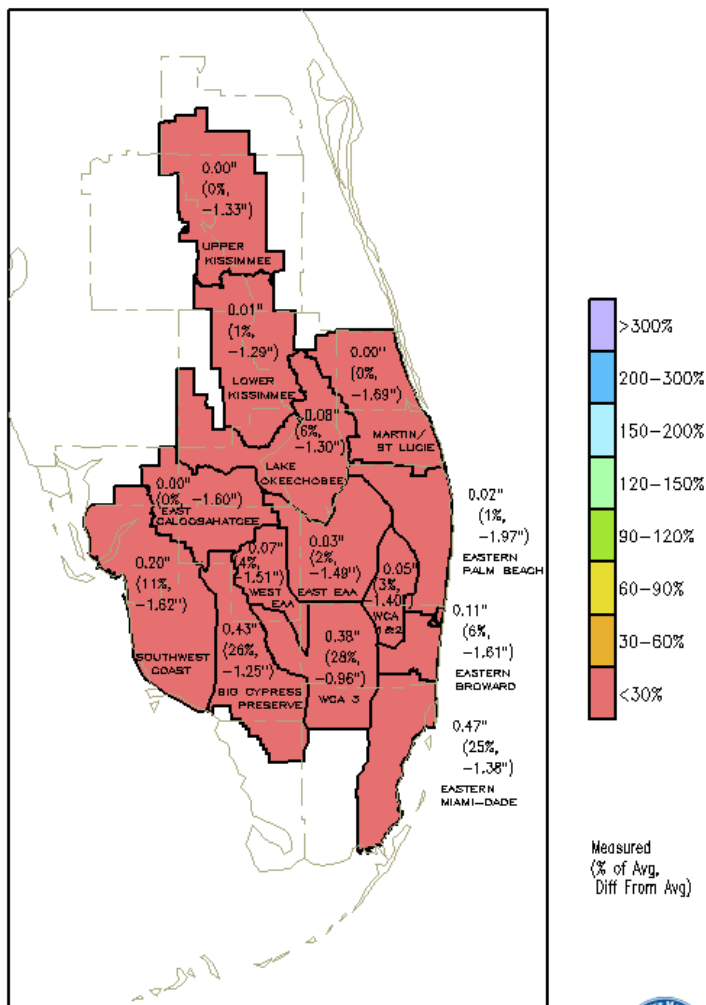
*just the*  
**FACTS**

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.*

SFWMD Rainfall  
13-SEP-2005 to 19-SEP-2005



DISTRICT-WIDE: 0.13" (8%, -1.43")

GRADS: COLA/ICES



### Rainfall overview:

- District-wide rainfall for the past week was less than 1/4".
- Rainfall outlook for the next 7 days (post Hurricane Rita) is below normal.
- Outlook for the remainder of the wet season is for an increased likelihood of above average rainfall.



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## State of the Water Management System

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### System-wide overview:

Hurricane Rita was anticipated to bring 2 to 4" of rainfall to south Miami-Dade and mainland Monroe counties and less than 0.5" to the Kissimmee Valley. (Actual rainfall proved to be less and will be reported next week.) Low-level releases continue from Lake Okeechobee.

**Lake Okeechobee** — Lake level is at 15.64 ft NGVD, down 0.16 ft since last week.\* Field staff continue to report algae blooms on the lake, particularly along the western shore and in Fisheating Bay. Several vegetation monitoring sites had only sparse Hydrilla present; no other plant species were present. Water transparency in the southern end of the lake decreased very markedly, possibly as a result of algal bloom-related substances in the water column. The current combination of elevated lake stage and low water transparencies means that little to no light is reaching the lake bottom. Consequently, improvements in lake vegetation are not expected until late spring/early summer of 2006.

**Upper Chain of Lakes/Kissimmee Basin** — Stage for upper basin lakes are at regulation schedule except for lakes Kissimmee, Cypress and Hatchineha, which are below regulation schedule. Concentrations of dissolved oxygen have increased over the last seven days. Vegetation management activities continue in the upper basin for hydrilla and floating plants and along the river for floating plants.

**St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries** —At the A1A Bridge, salinity in the St. Lucie increased over the past week. The Florida Oceanographic Society reports that dissolved oxygen concentrations in the St. Lucie are fair to good, while water clarity ranges from fair to poor. Salinity there has improved largely as a result of higher than normal tides.

In the Caloosahatchee Estuary, no salinity data were available this week. Seagrass density is lower than expected for this time of year, and blue-green algae blooms persist. Significant numbers of dead fish were observed, which may be related to red tide as well as to low dissolved oxygen. Conditions in both estuaries are poor.

**Water Conservation Areas** — Water depths continue to be high except in WCA-1. Levels are above regulation schedule in WCA-2A and WCA-3A. Prolonged deep water may start to cause stress on trees in these areas.

**Everglades National Park** — Rainfall was moderate over most of the Everglades during the past week, from 0.25" to 1". Despite moderate rainfall amounts, all depths decreased by 0.01 to 0.18 feet throughout the system.

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

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\* 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: September 21, 2005 (page 3)

**Florida Bay** — Salinity in the bay is largely unchanged since last week. Salinity concentrations in several locations that had dropped in the wake of Katrina's effects have persisted at lower levels. Freshwater runoff from rainfall continues to move south into the bay.

**Algae Update** — Increased monitoring continues on blue-green algae in Lake Okeechobee, St. Lucie River/Estuary, Caloosahatchee River, Kissimmee River/Upper Kissimmee Chain of Lakes and the District's eastern canals at 41 fixed monitoring sites. This species (*Mycrocystis*) is not typically toxic but can form toxic strains. The Blue-Green Algae Task Force continues to meet weekly to coordinate activities and response.

Toxicity results from samples taken Aug. 17-31 are reported below, in parts per billion (ppb):

Caloosahatchee <0.15 – 142 ppb

Kissimmee <0.15 – 12.4 ppb

St. Lucie 2.25 – 64 ppb

Lake Okeechobee .23 – 65.5 ppb

Eastern Canals .21 – 49.9 ppb

The World Health Organization guidance level for drinking water is 1.0 ppb; no recreational exposure standards exist. Current drinking water treatment plants have the capability to treat for these algae. For additional blue-green algae monitoring information, frequently asked questions and related links, visit the District's new web site:

<http://www.sfwmd.gov/site/index.php?id=611>