



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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SFWMD Governing Board Rescinds Water Shortage Warning *Heavy rainfall at the start of the wet season boosted water supplies*



West Palm Beach, FL — An early start to the wet season boosted water supplies and allowed the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board to rescind the Water Shortage Warning order today. This is the first time since November 2010 that the District is not under a warning or water shortage conditions.

The District had been in an extended dry period that included record-setting drought conditions, with a Water Shortage Warning in effect to encourage conservation and indicate a water shortage may be imminent. However, above-normal rainfall in the last two months replenished most of the 16-county region at the start of what is forecast to be an average or above-average wet season.

“It’s a positive sign to see water supplies filling up after a long stretch of below-normal rainfall,” said SFWMD Governing Board Chairman Joe Collins. “But no matter what the weather brings, the District remains ready for the inevitable weather extremes in South Florida, whether it’s a drought, tropical storm or hurricane.”

South Florida’s wet season started early this year, resulting in May 2012 rainfall being 160 percent of the historical average for the month. The District is storing as much of this water as possible, while balancing flood control responsibilities.

At 11.8 feet NGVD, Lake Okeechobee is 1.38 feet below normal for this time of year. However, it is a foot above the water shortage management level, and wet season rains are anticipated to improve lake levels over the next few weeks.

Water Shortage Warning

While parts of the District were under a Water Shortage Warning starting in November 2010, all water users in the 16-county region were subject to mandatory restrictions beginning in March 2011. Over the following months, water levels quickly declined during the height of the dry season and much-needed rainfall failed to materialize.

The emergency water shortage orders remained in place for the duration of the below-normal 2011 wet season.

In response to heavy October 2011 rainfall and the District’s success in capturing and storing much of that water, the Governing Board in November rescinded all previous water shortage orders and issued a District-wide Water Shortage Warning going into the 2011-2012 dry season. The warning is no longer needed after the system recovered from the driest months.

Water Conservation is a Year-Round Ethic

When water shortage orders are not in place, the District follows Year-Round Water Conservation Measures that target outdoor irrigation, which accounts for up to half of water use in South Florida. The Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule is just one of many initiatives implemented under the District’s Comprehensive Water Conservation Program.

The Comprehensive Water Conservation Program was approved by the SFWMD Governing Board in September 2008 to encourage more responsible use of water resources throughout South Florida. Numerous stakeholders worked with the District

The Dry Times, The Wet Times
In 2011, Lake Okeechobee’s lowest level was only 9.53 feet on June 27. It is now at 11.8 feet.
October 2010 to February 2011 was the driest period in 80 years. From October through February, the District’s 16-county region received a total of 5.69 inches, less than half the average rainfall for that five-month period.
October 2010 to May 2011 was the driest stretch since recordkeeping began.
The 9.8 inches of rain in October 2011 was 2 1/2 times the average for the month.
January 2012 was the driest January since recordkeeping began.
October 8, 2011, was the wettest single day in the upper and lower Kissimmee basins combined in nearly 100 years. In that one day, the storm dropped an average of 6.05 inches, with local maximums up to 14.09 inches.
May 2012 rainfall averaged 6.17 inches of rain — more than 1 1/2 times the average for the month. In localized areas of Miami-Dade County, more than 9 inches were recorded in six hours.

to define specific regulatory, voluntary and incentive-based programs and in-depth education and marketing efforts that help to foster a year-round conservation ethic.

For more information on ways to save water, visit www.savewaterfl.com.

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About the South Florida Water Management District

The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state – 16 counties from Orlando to the Keys. It is the oldest and largest of the state’s five water management districts. The agency mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply. A key initiative is cleanup and restoration of the Everglades.