

# MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Lauren Borocharner, Chief, Engineering Division (USACE)  
**FROM:** John Mitnik, Chief District Engineer (SFWMD)  
**DATE:** August 22, 2024  
**SUBJECT:** System Operational Position Statement August 20, 2024 to August 26, 2024

This Position Statement is to provide operational input for the one-week period from August 20, 2024 to August 26, 2024 based on system conditions and data observed during the previous Monday to Sunday 7-day period.

Current climate conditions: District August rainfall to date is near normal (99% of normal). The rainfall forecast (issued August 21) calls for near normal rainfall for the coming 7-day period and near to below normal for the following period.

Climate and weather forecasts: The most recent CPC precipitation outlook for Sep 2024 is for substantial increased chances (50-60%) of above Normal rainfall for south Florida. The 3-month window of Sep 2024 - Nov 2024 shows increased chances (40-50%) of above Normal rainfall for south Florida. La Nina conditions (drier) are expected to emerge in the September through November and persist through the winter. The transition into the 2024 – 2025 Dry Season goes through the 3-month window of Oct 2024 – Dec 2024 with equal chances of below, normal, and above normal (EC) for south Florida. The 3-month windows of Nov 2024 – Jan 2025 and Feb 2025 – April 2025 show increased chances (40-50%) of below normal rainfall for the entire District. The 3-month windows of Dec 2024 – Feb 2025 and Jan 2025 – Mar 2025 show outlooks for substantial increased chances (50-60%) of below normal rainfall for the entire District. The 3-month windows Mar 2025 – May 2025 shows slightly increased chances (33-40%) of below normal rainfall for south Florida. The transition into the 2025 wet season shows equal chances (EC) of rainfall for the state of Florida.

Hydrologic and tropical outlooks: Current climatological conditions are Normal but forecasted to turn drier by the start of the dry season. Current hydrological conditions are Normal. Based on the conditions at the start of the month the stage is projected to stay in Zone D for the next 2 months.

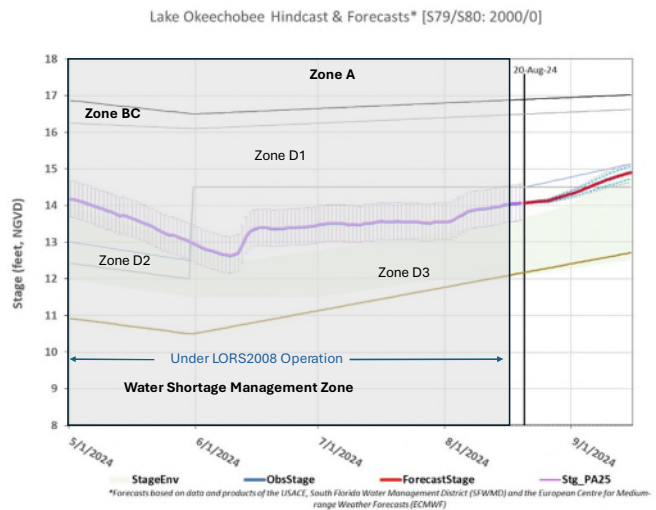
Water-supply conditions: The Lake Okeechobee seasonal net inflow outlook is Normal to Extremely Wet at Low risk for water supply. The multi-seasonal net inflow outlook is Normal at Moderate risk for water supply.

Estuary conditions: For the 7-day period, August 12 to August 18, 2024, total inflow to the Caloosahatchee Estuary averaged approximately 4,500 cfs with no flow coming from Lake Okeechobee through S-77. Salinities in the upper estuary were within the optimal range (0-10) for tape grass. Salinities were in the damaging range (< 5) for adult eastern oysters at Cape Coral, in the optimal range (10- 25) at Shell Point and Sanibel. Total discharge to the St. Lucie Estuary was about 1,750 cfs with no flow coming from Lake Okeechobee, about 550 cfs coming from C-23 Basin, about 600 cfs coming from C-24 Basin, and about 600 cfs coming from Tidal Basin. The 7-day average salinity in the middle estuary was within the lower stressed range (5-9) for adult eastern oysters.

## Lake Okeechobee stage and ecological conditions:

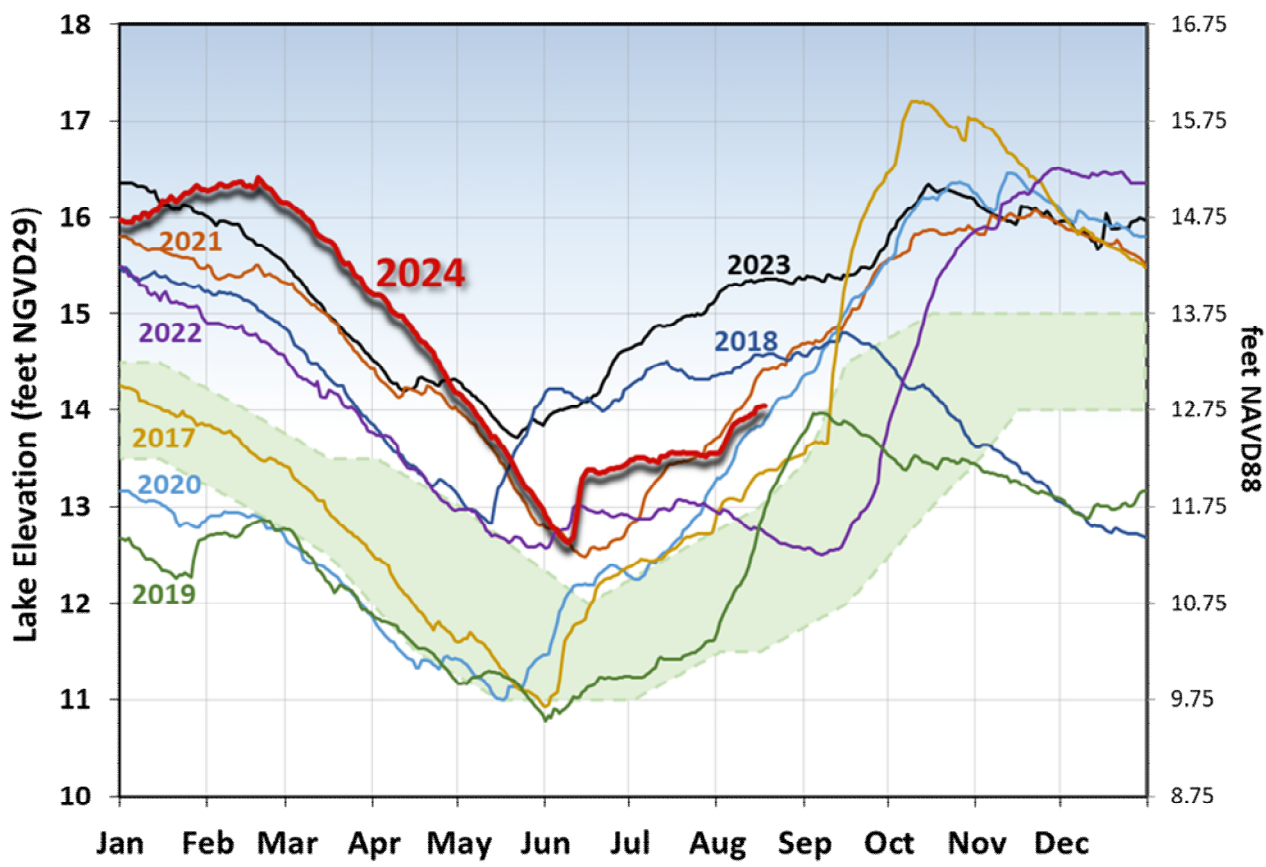
On August 18 the daily average Lake Okeechobee stage was 12.74 feet NAVD88 (14.05 feet NGVD29), which placed it within the bottom third of Zone D (Zone D3 of the PA25 simulation) of the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM) above the ecological envelope. Lake stage increased by 0.13 feet over the preceding 7-day period. The current climate outlook is for ENSO-neutral with La Niña favored to develop during September-November (ENSO- increased likelihood of below normal dry season rainfall north of the Lake). The LOSOM criteria to consider implementation of Recovery Operations to lower the lake level into Lake Okeechobee's Recovery Envelope has been triggered. Efforts to manage Lake levels into the Recovery Envelope could reduce the chance of prolonged Recovery Operations which include releases to the St. Lucie Estuary and Lake Worth Lagoon. The District recommends USACE implements a non-harmful release

## Forecast Modeling Based on PA25 Simulation



from Lake Okeechobee to the Caloosahatchee Estuary with an average discharge of 2,000 cfs (7-day pulse) as measured at the S-79 structure, zero lake releases to the St. Lucie Estuary and zero lake releases to the Lake Worth Lagoon. The USACE should continue to track Red Tide and Blue Green Algae conditions, and should conditions change during this operational period, the USACE should look to reassess releases as needed. The USACE typically implements the releases to the estuaries over a 7-day period starting on Saturday and ending on Friday.

### Lake Okeechobee Stage vs Recovery Ecological Envelope



The current and seven prior year’s annual stage hydrographs for Lake Okeechobee in comparison to the recovery envelope (light green). A shift from the normal ecological envelope to the recovery envelope occurred because the 30-day minimum lake stage (elevations exposed for at least 30 days, nonconsecutively) in the June 1 – July 31, 2023, window was >13 ft NGVD29 (11.75 ft NAVD88)

Navigation and recreation conditions: Currently, there are no planned deviation or declared water shortage impacting navigation or lockages.

STOF water supply conditions: Current Lake Okeechobee stage is sufficiently high that water supply deliveries to the Seminole Tribe of Florida (STOF) Brighton Reservation, if needed, will not be impacted. When Lake Okeechobee stage recedes below 13 feet NGVD29, deliveries via Pump Station G-207 on the Harney Pond Canal and Pump Station G-208 on the Indian Prairie Canal start to be limited or severely impacted.

Algal Bloom conditions: The FWRI reported on August 16, 2024, showed that *Karenia brevis*, the Florida red tide dinoflagellate, was not observed in any samples collected statewide over the past week. NOAA’s Harmful Algal Bloom Monitoring System suggests moderate cyanobacteria abundance across the northern and western nearshore regions of the Lake.

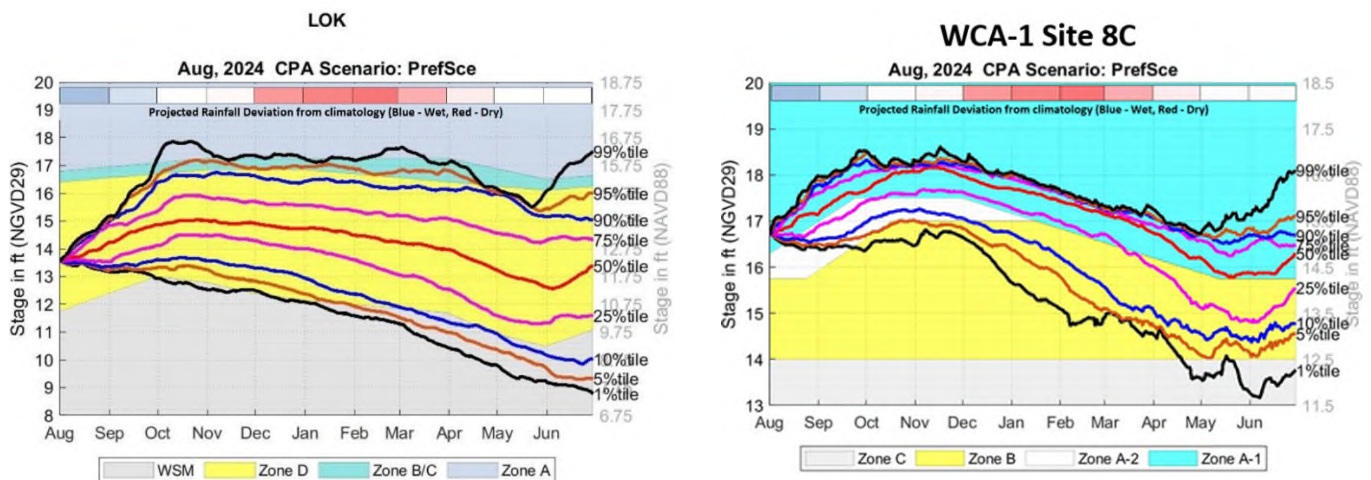
STA conditions: In STA-1E, Central Flow-way is offline for construction activities. An operational restriction is in place in the Western Flow-way for post-construction vegetation grow-in, and in the Eastern Flow-way for vegetation establishment

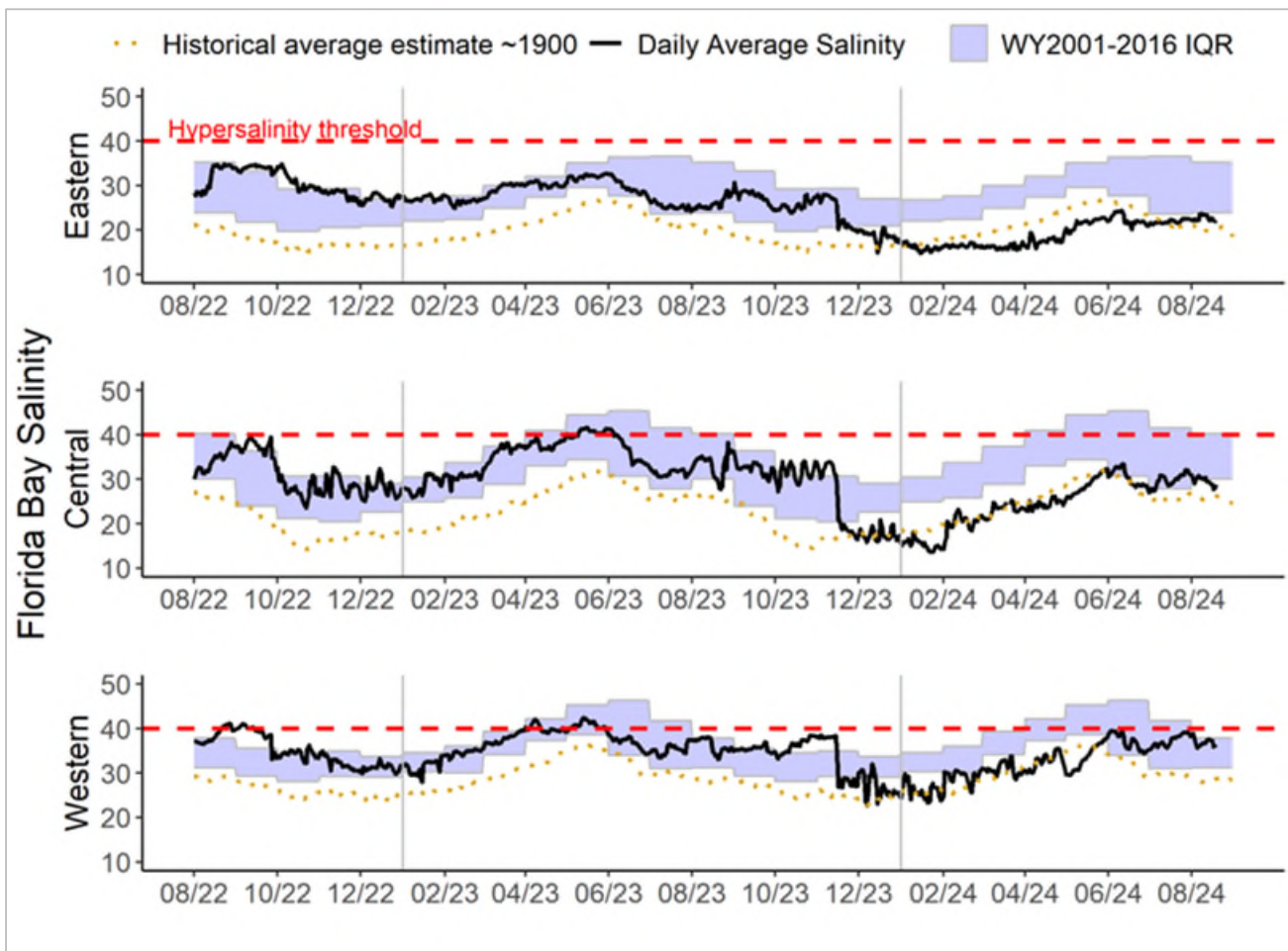
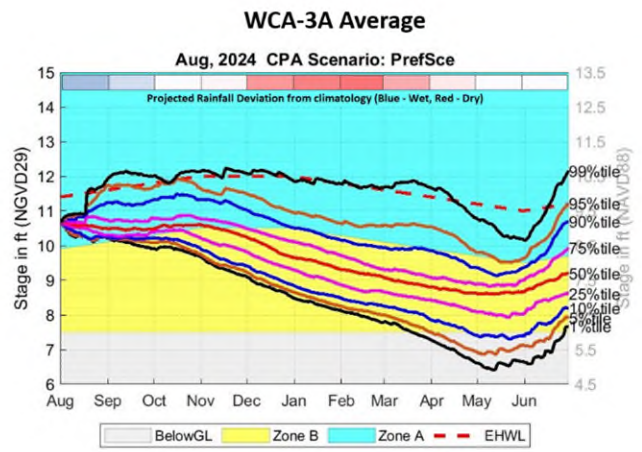
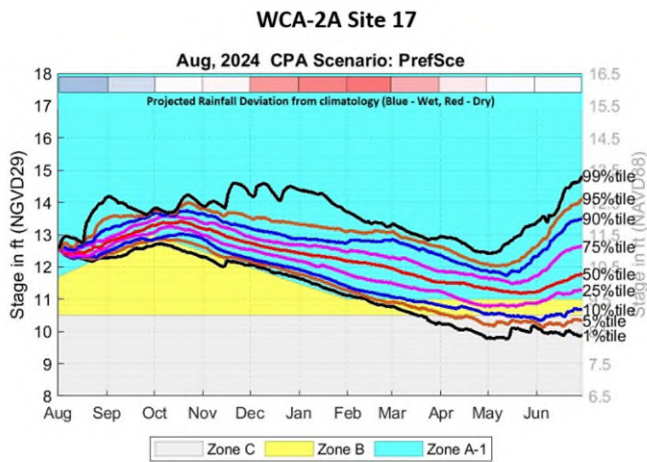
following erosion repair. In STA-1W, an operational restriction is in place in the Northern Flow-way for vegetation management activities. Treatment cells are near or above target stage. Vegetation in the flow-ways is highly stressed. The 365-day PLRs for the Eastern and Western Flow-ways are high (above 0.9 g/m<sup>2</sup>/yr). STA-2 has operational limitations due to vegetation stress and vegetation rehabilitation, with cell stages near or above target stages and 365-day Phosphorus Loading Rates (PLRs) for flow-ways 2 and 3 are high (above 0.9 g/m<sup>2</sup>/yr). In STA-3/4, Eastern Flow-way is under limitations for post-drawdown vegetation grow-in, treatment cells are at or above target stage, vegetation in the other two flow-ways is stressed to highly stressed, and the 365-day PLRs for the Central and Western Flow-ways are high (above 0.9 g/m<sup>2</sup>/yr). For the current operational period the USACE is not requesting flows south to the STAs under LOSOM. The District will continue to work with the USACE to manage Lake Okeechobee levels in an effort to curtail harmful discharges over this year. To help with this objective the District will move as much water south through the Stormwater Treatment Areas as possible under the current permits and as regional conditions allow.

**WCA conditions:** On August 18 the daily average stage in WCA-1 is at 15.07 feet NAVD88 (16.65 feet NGVD29), in Zone A2 and 0.03 feet below regulation schedule. On August 18 the daily average stage in WCA-2A is at 11.24 feet NAVD88 (12.75 feet NGVD29), in Zone A and 0.68 feet above regulation schedule. On August 18 the daily average stage in WCA-3A is at 9.15 feet NAVD88 (10.67 feet NGVD29), in Zone A and 0.66 feet above regulation schedule. Flood control releases are being implemented by USACE to move water through the WCAs via the S-12 structures. In addition, the District is releasing water to tide from WCA-1 via the Hillsboro Canal at S-39, releasing water to tide from WCA-2A via the C-14 Canal at S-38 and releasing water to tide from WCA-3A through S-151 and S-31 into the C-6 Canal and via the NNR Canal at S-34E. Over the 7-day period from August 12 to August 18, 2024, no regulatory releases were sent from Lake Okeechobee south to the STAs. No lake regulatory releases reached the Lake Worth Lagoon through the C-51 canal during this period.

**ENP conditions:** Releases from WCA-3A to the ENP continue through the S-12 structures, the S-343A and B structures, the S-344 structure, and the S-333 structures. The S12s (A through D) are fully open and passing the largest proportion of the releases. Releases through S-333 and S-333N are limited by the constraint in L-29 canal stage, currently at 6.96 feet NAVD88 (8.50 feet NGVD29). Looking back a year ago, current conditions are deeper across most of WCA-3A, and western ENP. Hydrologic connectivity remains robust within the major sloughs of ENP. Average stage remained the same in Taylor Slough last week and remain above the recent average. Salinity decreased on average in Florida Bay compared to last week and remains at the 25th percentile for this time of the year in Eastern and Central Florida Bay and between 25th and 75th percentiles for the Western regions. Given that the WCA-3A stage remains in Zone A, the Tamiami Trail Flow Formula (TTFF) continues to recommend maximum practicable releases from WCA-3A to ENP. The District recommends continuing with the current operations for the releases from WCA-3A in accordance with the Combined Operating Plan.

August 2024 Conditional Position Analysis (CPA) results for Lake Okeechobee, WCA-1, WCA-2A and WCA-3A.





Eastern (top panel), Central (middle panel) and Western (bottom panel) Florida Bay daily average salinities with WY2001-2016 interquartile (25-75 percentile) ranges (IQR) and estimated historical daily average salinities. The hyper salinity threshold indicates the level at which salinities start to become harmful to seagrass.