



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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SFWMD E-Briefing: Water Shortage Continues Despite Recent Rainfall
Landscape irrigation restrictions remain vital to protecting regional water supply



(SFWMD, 5-07-2009, Click on picture for larger version.)

A dried-out snail shell rests on the cracked earth in Stormwater Treatment Area 1-East in western Palm Beach County.

West Palm Beach, FL — In an effort to keep the public informed about the dry conditions gripping much of the state, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) is issuing the following latest conditions report.

SFWMD meteorologists report that appreciable rain is beginning to fall over portions of the district, with southwestern through north-central portions of the South Florida region benefiting most. These rains are expected to continue through the weekend, possibly becoming heavy and widespread early next week and potentially signaling the beginning of the 2009 wet season.

Despite the pending start of the wet season, South Florida remains in the midst of a regional water shortage. The period from November 2008 through April 2009 ranks as the driest six-month period in South Florida history based on records dating back to 1932. Persistent rainfall is needed to begin to make up for a rainfall deficit of more than 11 inches. The latest [U.S. Drought Monitor report](#) shows that most of the region is experiencing extreme drought conditions, just below the driest and highest level of the monitor's intensity scale.

[Groundwater levels](#) throughout much of the region have dropped to within the lowest 10 percent of their historical range, with some monitoring wells reaching all-time lows. The primary regional storage systems – the Water Conservation Areas and Lake Okeechobee – also continue to decline. At 10.63 feet, the lake is nearly 2.8 feet below its historic average for this time of year.

In response to the continued dry conditions, the SFWMD Governing Board on Thursday approved new emergency water shortage orders:

- **Lake Okeechobee Service Area and Southern Indian Prairie Basin:** Imposes Modified Phase III restrictions that require a 45 percent reduction in water use for agriculture, nurseries and golf courses that draw irrigation water from Lake Okeechobee or surface waters hydraulically connected to Lake Okeechobee. The order affects users within portions of Okeechobee, Glades, Palm Beach, Lee, Hendry, Martin and St. Lucie counties.
- **Palm Beach and Broward Counties:** Halts surface water withdrawals by diversion and impoundment permit holders and specified agricultural permit holders from Water Conservation Areas 1 and 2 and regional canals.
- **West Palm Beach:** Provides several water supply relief options for the City of West Palm Beach.

The orders take effect on Monday, May 18.

A majority of the District remains under two-day-a-week landscape watering restrictions. In recent weeks, emergency orders – which the SFWMD Governing Board concurred with Thursday – were issued to create more stringent water use restrictions in specific areas that warrant additional resource protection. SFWMD enforcement staff has reviewed the current restrictions with local enforcement officials at recent workshops in Okeechobee, Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, Martin and Monroe counties.

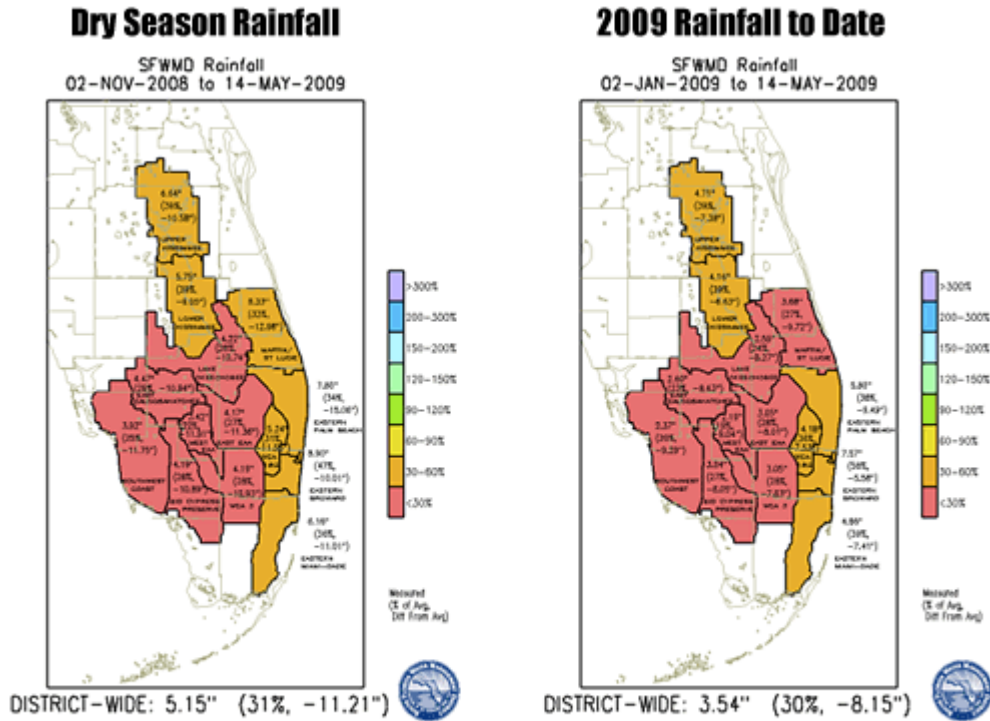
A burn ban is also in place on District-managed public lands to protect lives, property and the environment amid the drought. The ban means no fires in grills, fireplaces or fire rings provided by the District or other authorized management agencies until further notice. The use of portable camp stoves and grills, brought in by users for cooking purposes only, is allowed.

The SFWMD is closely monitoring water levels and is urging residents and businesses to conserve water and follow landscape irrigation restrictions to stretch available supplies. More information about irrigation limits by area is available on the District's [water restrictions](#) Web site. For water saving tips, visit www.savewaterfl.com.

District-Wide Averages as of May 14, 2009

RAINFALL to Date, Jan. 2 - May 14:	3.54 inches
DEFICIT to Date, Jan. 2 - May 14:	- 8.15 inches
DRY SEASON DEFICIT, Nov. 2, 2008 - May 14:	- 11.21 inches
LAKE OKEECHOBEE:	May 14, 2009: 10.63 feet NGVD May 14, 2008: 9.98 feet NGVD

Rainfall Maps



Click on images above for higher resolution versions.

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About the South Florida Water Management District – [Celebrating 60 Years \(1949-2009\)](#)

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.