



NEWS RELEASE

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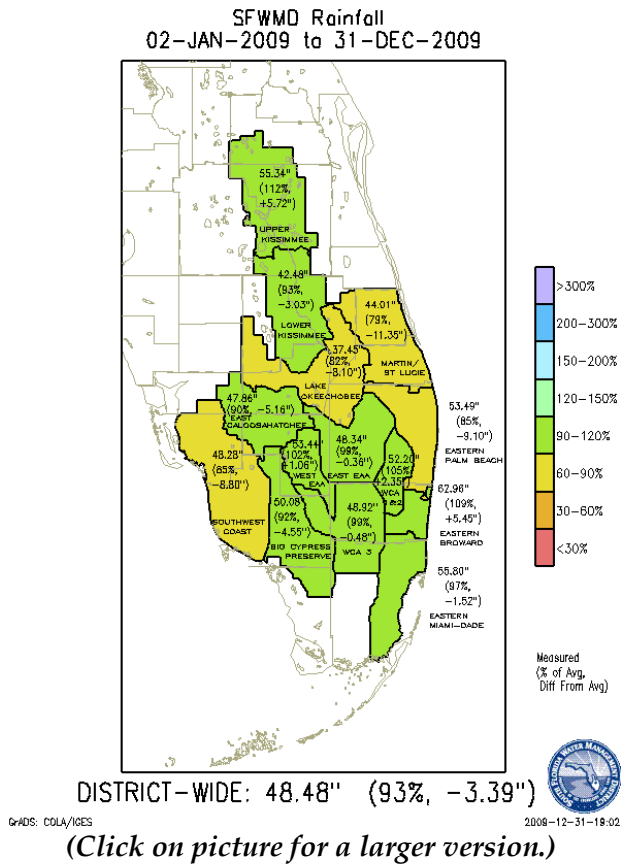
South Florida Water Management District

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2009 Roller Coaster of Weather Extremes, Water Management Challenges *Conservation the best option to sustain steady water supply*



West Palm Beach, FL – Last January, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) entered 2009 during the driest six-month period in South Florida’s history. The month of May set a rainfall record followed by a near-record dry October. The new year begins with caution as the height of the dry season looms once again.

“Year in and year out, the District must make informed decisions that balance flood control, environmental protection and water supply amid weather conditions that quickly turn from deluge to drought,” said SFWMD Governing Board Chairman Eric Buermann. “Water conservation remains one constant amid these challenges, and we

must continue to advance practices that save water to protect our resources in 2010 and beyond.”

Last winter and early spring, water managers were faced with an average 10.13-inch rainfall deficit by the end of the dry season in April 2009. In an abrupt turnabout, May 2009 became the wettest May on record, with 9.04 inches of rain falling across the District. The 2009 wet season reached 40.09 inches of rainfall from May through the last days of October, representing a nearly average amount for this time period. Yet by month’s end, October became the fourth driest October on record. From a water supply perspective, significant rainfall in December helped replenish many groundwater resources, particularly along the east coast.

Lake Okeechobee began the year close to 14 feet NGVD, dipped to about 11 feet around mid-May and rebounded back to approximately 14.5 feet in mid-September. The lake level on December 31 was 13.58 feet NGVD. This range provides near ideal conditions for submerged and emergent aquatic vegetation, the foundation of lake wildlife. Apple snails – the sole food of the endangered snail kite – as well as breeding fish and birds thrive in these conditions.

In all, a total of 48.48 inches of rain fell District-wide from January 1 through December 31, 2009, which is 93 percent of the average and represents a 3.39-inch deficit. Locally, eastern Miami-Dade County began the year amid dry conditions, with only 4.60 inches of rainfall from January to the end of April 2009, representing 47 percent of the average, or a deficit of 5.25 inches.

The wet season began in May, and the county ended the year with a total of 55.80 inches of rainfall, representing 97 percent of the average, or a deficit of only 1.52 inches.

“Our great challenge with this weather variability is to provide enough water to support 7.5 million residents and the businesses that sustain our economy while also protecting the health of South Florida’s ecosystems,” Buermann said. “Roller-coaster conditions were a driving force behind the Governing Board’s adoption of year-round water conservation measures that place permanent limits on landscape irrigation. The new rule, and the conservation ethic it instills, is just one component of a comprehensive water conservation program necessary to sustain South Florida into the future.”

The SFWMD continues to closely monitor water levels and is urging residents and businesses to conserve water and follow landscape irrigation restrictions in effect. More information about irrigation restrictions by area is available on the District’s [water restrictions](#) Web site. For water saving tips, 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.