



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Lower Lake Okeechobee Levels to Trigger Navigation Lock Closures**

*Lake access will remain available at area boat ramps*

**Okeechobee, FL** – As the level of Lake Okeechobee approaches 12.5 feet NGVD and lower, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) will close navigation locks along the lake's north shore to boat traffic. With the lake level currently at 12.53 feet NGVD, the S-127 lock at Buckhead Ridge could close by the end of this week.

In addition to the S-127, other navigation locks affected by this operational decision are:

- S-135 at J&S Fish Camp
- G-36 at Henry Creek
- S-193 at Taylor Creek
- S-131 at Lakeport

The navigation locks are part of the Central and Southern Florida Project that provides flood control for the region. They are operated by the District based on criteria for navigational safety established by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The District needs to close the locks due both to low water on the lakeside approaches to the locks and to protect sensitive manatee protection devices located in the floors of the lock chambers. Once closed, locks will not be staffed by a locktender and cannot be opened even during an emergency situation.

The operations schedule for these locks is:

Structures	Lake Level in Feet NGVD				
	<b>Normal Operation</b> (Locktender present)	<b>Secured Open</b> (Free access, No locktender)	<b>Basin Water Conservation Operational</b> (Locktender present)	<b>Once a Month Operation</b> (Locktender present)	<b>Closed</b> (No locktender)
S-135	> 13.50	13.50-12.00	-	-	12.00
G-36	> 13.50	13.50-12.00	-	-	12.00
S-193	> 13.50	13.50-13.00	13.00-12.00	12.00-11.50	12.00
S-127	> 12.50	-	-	-	12.50
S-131	> 13.25	13.25-12.00	-	-	12.00

Differences in operations from one navigation lock to another reflect conditions in the area served by each lock.

For example, the S-193 navigation lock at Taylor Creek can remain operational at lower lake levels because the lakeside approach and the floor elevation of its lock chamber are lower than other locks. However, the S-193 is placed back into operation from the secured open position at higher lake levels than other locks to better manage water levels in the Taylor Creek basin's canal system. And when the lake is between 11.5 and 12 feet NGVD, navigation through the S-193 is still possible, but water retention is so important at this stage that lockage is limited to only one day each month to allow residents in the area to move their boats to different dockage.

In contrast, the S-127 navigation lock at Buckhead Ridge moves directly from normal operation to closed at 12.5 feet NGVD because of conditions in the canal system served by that navigation lock.

The District operates navigation locks on the north shore of Lake Okeechobee to provide the greatest access possible to the lake for the boating public. Boating access to the lake will remain available at several public boat ramps located inside the Herbert Hoover Dike. As water levels in Lake Okeechobee begin to rise, navigation locks will resume operation at 12.5 feet NGVD at Taylor Creek, J&S Fish Camp, Henry Creek and Lakeport and at 13 feet NGVD at Buckhead Ridge.

For a guide to recreation sites on Lake Okeechobee, including boat ramps and public parks, please visit the District website at [www.sfwmd.gov](http://www.sfwmd.gov), check at your favorite bait and tackle shop or stop by the SFWMD Okeechobee Service Center on the second floor of the Bank of America building in downtown Okeechobee. For more information, please call the SFWMD Okeechobee Service Center at 863-462-5260.

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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.*