



NEWS RELEASE

January 4, 2011

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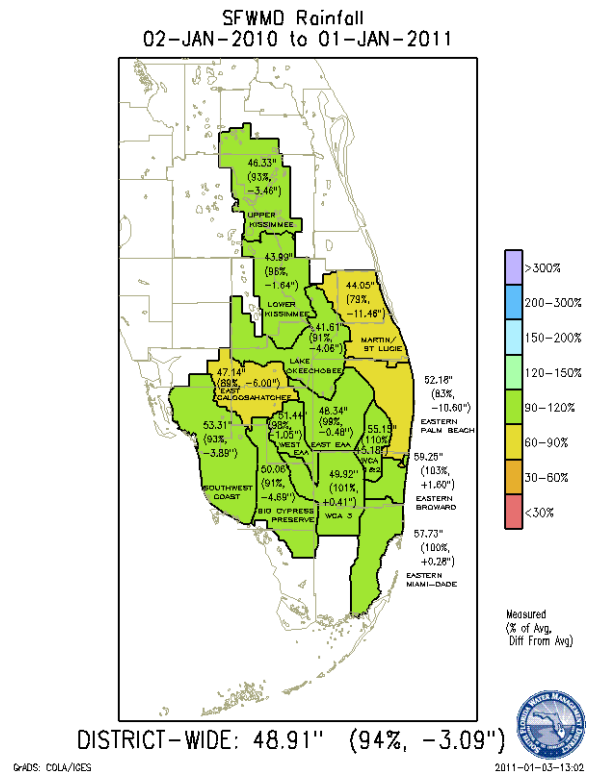
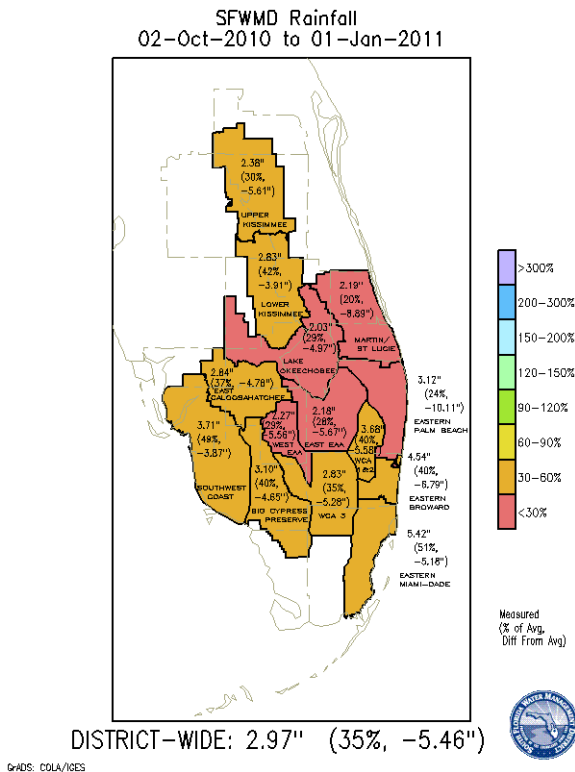
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Record Low Rainfall for Last Three Months Ends a Below Average 2010 Seasonal forecasts show few signs of relief, making water conservation efforts imperative

October to December 2010 Rainfall

2010 Year-End Rainfall



(Click on the maps for larger versions.)

West Palm Beach, FL – On the heels of a drier-than-normal wet season, rainfall continued to be scarce during the current dry season. The period October through December 2010 produced the lowest rainfall for these three months since recordkeeping began in 1932. The record-low three months ended a below-average 2010 for rainfall in the District’s 16-county region.

“The below-average rainfall during the wet season and the lack of rainfall during the current dry season has caused groundwater and surface water levels to decline

significantly,” said Tommy Strowd, SFWMD Deputy Executive Director of Operations and Maintenance. “The existing situation and the long-term forecast for continued extreme dry conditions make water conservation efforts imperative.”

District-wide rainfall for the period registered 2.97 inches and was 35 percent of the average historical rainfall for the three months. Already several monitor wells in Miami-Dade and St. Lucie counties are registering critically low water levels.

For 2010, rainfall amounts averaged 48.91 inches District-wide, running 3.09 inches below average. Florida receives an average of 52 inches of rainfall a year, with 70 percent typically falling during the five-month wet season from approximately late May through mid-October.

December Conditions

For the month of December, rainfall for the District’s 16-county region measured 0.92 inches, or only 46 percent of the historical average rainfall for the month.

The least amount of rain occurred in the Upper Kissimmee area and in Martin County, where less than three-quarters of an inch fell on average. Lake Okeechobee fared about the same, recording only 0.68 inches.

Lake Okeechobee stands at 12.43 feet above sea level, down from 12.86 feet last month and 1.12 feet lower than this time last year. The historical average for the lake on this date is 14.74 feet or nearly 2 1/2 feet higher than its current stage. Without recharge from considerable rainfall, the lake will continue on its accelerated decline creating a delicate balancing act of environmental and stakeholder water supply needs.

Just to the northwest of Lake Okeechobee, Lake Istokpoga is in water shortage conditions for water users in its immediate area after seeing water levels drop to 38.7 feet above sea level.

The Lower East Coast areas saw rainfall amounts about 50 percent of average, with Palm Beach County reaching only 34 percent of its average at 1.02 inches.

The District’s Southwest Coast rainfall amounts reached more than 70 percent of average with 1.33 inches.

Dry Season Update

In October, the National Weather Service declared an earlier-than-usual start to the dry season along with moderate strength La Niña conditions. La Niña is a weather phenomenon that generally creates exceptionally dry conditions.

While about 12 inches of rain falls on average across the District from November through March, La Niña-influenced dry seasons often produce only about two-thirds of the average during this five-month period.

The extreme dry conditions follow the driest wet season since 1984 in South Florida. An average of 27.31 inches of rain fell between June 1 and October 31, representing 82 percent of the normal amount and a deficit of 6 inches.

The Certainty of Unpredictability

The existing drier-than-normal dry season conditions once again showcase South Florida's weather extremes and water management challenges.

- **Drier than Normal:** The 2010 wet season produced an approximately 6 inch deficit.
- **Wetter than Normal:** The 2009-2010 dry season recorded 131 percent of average dry season rainfall, representing 5.88 inches above normal from the beginning of November through the end of May.
- **Record Wet Conditions:** In 2009, the sea breeze cycle ushered in the wet season in May. With 9.04 inches of rain falling across the District, May 2009 became the wettest May on record, according to District records dating back to 1932.
- **Record Dry Conditions:** November 2008 through April 2009 marked the driest six-month period in South Florida, according to District records dating back to 1932.

Water Conservation Remains Key

The South Florida Water Management District's Comprehensive Water Conservation Program was approved by the Governing Board in September 2008 to encourage more consistent use of water resources throughout South Florida. Numerous stakeholders worked with the District to define specific regulatory, voluntary and incentive-based programs and in-depth education and marketing plans that will help foster a year-round conservation ethic. The program includes Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Conservation Measures that took effect in March 2010.

The SFWMD continues to closely monitor water levels and is urging residents and businesses to conserve water and follow landscape irrigation conservation measures in effect. Water-savings tips and more information about irrigation limits by area are available at www.savewaterfl.com.

For more information:

- [SFWMD Weather/Rainfall Data](#)
- [National Weather Service Dry Season Forecast](#)
- [Climate Prediction Center FAQ on La Niña](#)
- [Climate Prediction Center Precipitation Forecast](#)

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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.