



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **North Shore Lake Okeechobee Lock Refurbishment Nears Completion** *Henry Creek and J&S Fish Camp locks to reopen to the public Saturday*

**Okeechobee, FL** – The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) will reopen two navigation locks on the north shore of Lake Okeechobee to the public this weekend following the completion of major renovations. A third navigation lock at Lakeport will continue to be out of service for refurbishment until further notice.

The G-36 navigation lock at Henry Creek and the S-135 lock at J&S Fish Camp will be secured in the open position, allowing access to Lake Okeechobee again by noon on Saturday, January 29. The navigation locks will remain in operation until the lake level reaches 12 feet NGVD, when they will be closed to navigation. The current lake level is 12.52 feet NGVD. No locktender will be on duty during either phase of operation.

Due to a slight difference in elevations between the canal systems and Lake Okeechobee, boaters may experience unexpected flow conditions in the lock chamber and are encouraged to use caution when navigating.

Repair work at the S-131 navigation lock in Lakeport is ongoing.

Built in the early 1960s by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the three navigation locks on Lake Okeechobee have been upgraded with hydraulically powered hoist systems to reduce the cycle times to travel through the locks. The locks allow boats to navigate to and from Lake Okeechobee and are operated by the District based on criteria for navigational safety established by the Corps.

Scheduling the renovation of all three locks at the same time saved taxpayers approximately \$260,000 in design and engineering costs. The winning bid for all three lock refurbishments totaled \$1.7 million.

The navigational lock refurbishment work is part of an ongoing effort to maintain and upgrade the infrastructure of the Central and Southern Florida Project, a massive system of flood control works authorized by the U.S. Congress in 1948. The SFWMD

has established a 50-year operations and maintenance plan to ensure regular, timely maintenance of the system.

For more information about the locks, please contact the Okeechobee Service Center at 863-462-5260 or the Orlando Service Center at 407-858-6100.

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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.*