

the wet season — will need time to begin alleviating months of low water levels and wildfire danger and recharge the system.

“Drier-than-normal conditions are expected to continue, evaporation rates will reach their highest amounts during May, and residents will see low water levels in canals, lakes and ponds fall further,” said Susan Sylvester, the SFWMD Director of the Operations Control and Hydro Data Management Department. “Rainfall is the only recharge option. We face the ever-present water management challenges of balancing flood control, water supply and the health of the natural system for 7.7 million residents and the environment.”

Current Conditions

April’s rainfall District-wide was 1.41 inches, or 56 percent of the historical average, leaving a deficit of 1.11 inches for the month. Overall, the rainfall deficit from October through May 3 was 7.87 inches.

The hardest hit area of South Florida continues to be from northern Miami-Dade County north through the Treasure Coast, with about half — or less — of normal rainfall for the last seven months. In eastern Palm Beach County, the rainfall deficit since the beginning of October now exceeds 16 inches.

District water managers are working with users and utilities in south Miami-Dade County and the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority (FKAA) to address critically low water levels in the wellfields that serve these areas. The FKAA started operation last week of its 6-million-gallon-a-day desalination plant to meet water demands.

Lake Okeechobee, the backup water supply for Florida’s lower east coast has dropped below 11 feet NGVD to 10.85 feet NGVD, meaning little water, if any, can be directed from the lake to the Water Conservation Areas. With no inflow into the Water Conservation Areas, which are also suffering from extremely low levels, there is no water to recharge urban canals and wellfields.

Historically, Lake Okeechobee would be more than 2 feet above its current level at this time of year. The lake also remains in its water shortage management band, meaning mandatory cutbacks for permitted water users in the immediate area.

The District remains in water shortage conditions, and residents are asked to follow landscape irrigation limits. Links to information about irrigation limits by area, current conditions and water-savings tips are available at www.sfwmd.gov/waterwatch.

Wet Season Preparation: Maintenance and Keeping the Flow Going

Structural maintenance and upgrades, accomplished primarily during the dry season, are critical to ensuring that the regional flood control system of more than 1,600 miles of canals and 1,000 miles of levees and berms operates at optimal capacity. During the past five years, the District has invested \$240 million in essential maintenance work, including:

- Hardening and overhauling pump stations
- Overhauling gated spillways
- Replacing project culverts
- Dredging canals
- Stabilizing canal banks
- Enhancing Stormwater Treatment Areas

The District is also set to conduct its annual “Hurricane Freddy” exercise as part of the agency’s emergency operations readiness for hurricane season.

South Florida Wet Season Facts

- On average, South Florida’s wet season begins around May 20 and ends around October 13, lasting for about 21 weeks.
- Typically, about two-thirds of annual rains fall during the wet season, or approximately 35 inches out of 52 inches.
- Since 1932, virtually all wet seasons have produced 2 to 4 feet of rainfall.
- June is usually South Florida’s wettest month.
- The wet season has three general phases:
 - Memorial Day weekend through July 4 weekend, which are typically the wettest 6 weeks of the year.
 - Early July through mid August, which are hotter and often drier.
 - Late August through October, which are characterized by highly variable rainfall mainly due to tropical activity and cold fronts.

Water Shortage Orders:

- [Two-Day Landscape Irrigation and Golf Course Order](#)
- [Lake Okeechobee Service Area Order](#)
- [Broward and Palm Beach Order](#)
- [Bypass Structure Order](#)
- [South Dade Order](#)



More information is available at:

- [Water Shortage Fact Sheets](#)
- [SFWMD Weather/Rainfall Data](#)
- [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.