



# NEWS RELEASE

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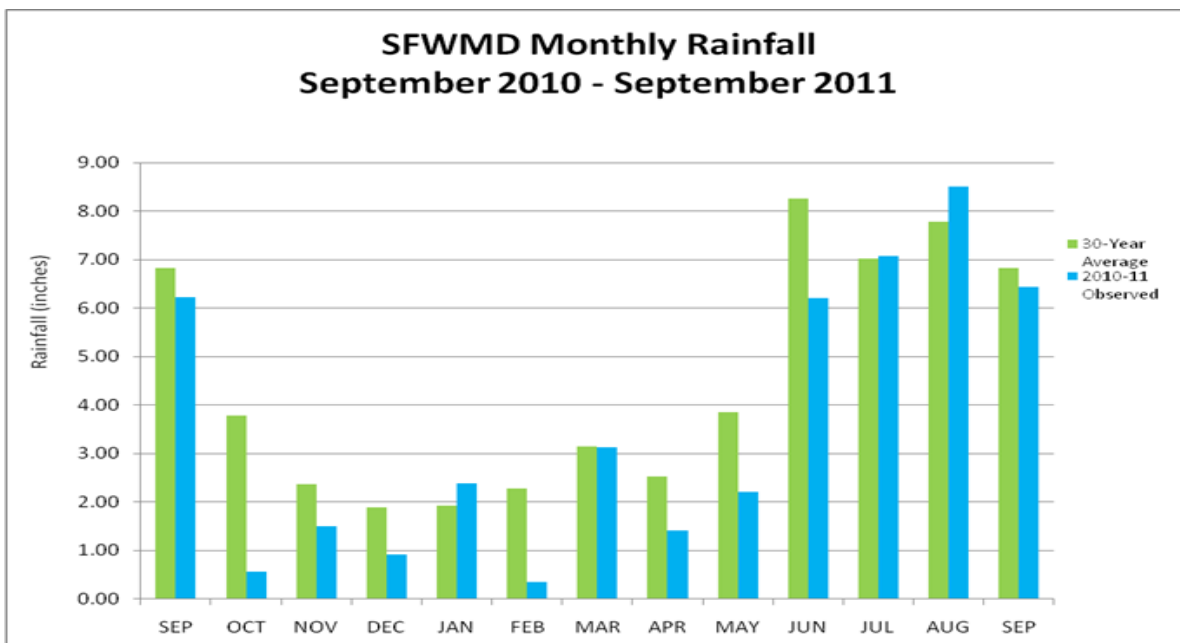
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## Water Shortage Continues Despite Average Rainfall in September *Lake Okeechobee level remains very low with little time remaining for wet season rainfall*



**West Palm Beach, FL** – September’s rainfall was about average in the South Florida Water Management District’s 16-county region, but continued low water levels in Lake Okeechobee and many groundwater wells indicate that water shortage conditions could persist through the spring.

“A key component of our water supply system is Lake Okeechobee. This year’s average wet season rainfall has not been enough to refill the lake above water shortage levels,” said Susan Sylvester, SFWMD Chief of the Water Control Operations Bureau. “October will be a critical month for rainfall, before the dry season kicks in.”

A cold front on the last day of September ended the daily sea-breeze cycle that drives the familiar afternoon showers throughout the summer. While average or above-average rainfall is still possible over the next few weeks with fronts or tropical systems bringing in heavy rain, the cycle of daily rainfall driven by the sea-breeze is likely over. Heavy

rainfall is forecast for this weekend and early next week, but it is too early to tell what impact that might have on the regional water supply.

For the month of September, the region received 6.43 inches of rain, which amounts to only slightly less than the historical average of 6.83 inches for the month. While September's rainfall is welcome in the short-term, it has been insufficient to make up for the rainfall deficit from the last dry season.

Rainfall totals varied throughout the 16-county region in September. The Upper Kissimmee region fared the best, with a total of 7.28 inches, amounting to 1.46 inches above average for the month. On the southern end of the 16-county region, the Keys received only 4.5 inches of rain, a deficit of 2.23 inches. The East Coast averaged approximately 1.5 inches below average, while the Southwest Coast was about average with 8.29 inches. Big Cypress Preserve received 8.01 inches, a half-inch above average.

Lake Okeechobee continues to suffer from a drier-than-normal period that lasted from October 2010 until June 2011. As the back-up water supply for South Florida, Lake Okeechobee is at 11.09 feet NGVD – more than 3.5 feet below normal for this time of year. Rainfall over the last week has not been able to keep up with evapotranspiration losses, causing the lake to level off. Meteorologists are predicting another drier-than-normal dry season due to the effects of La Niña.

The SFWMD is storing as much water as possible in preparation for the dry season, while also providing local flood protection. A late-season, well-placed tropical system or front remains the best chance for overcoming the long-term water shortage.

Water shortage orders remain in place due to low lake levels and the pending dry season. A strong ethic of water conservation remains key to stretching the water supply. This is the time of year when landscapes are conditioned to grow longer roots to get by with less watering.

*Information about water shortage orders and warnings, current weather and water conditions and water-saving tips can be found at [www.sfwmd.gov/waterwatch](http://www.sfwmd.gov/waterwatch).*

*For the latest Water Watch Briefing with helpful links and water levels in key locations, [click here](#).*

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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.*