



NEWS RELEASE

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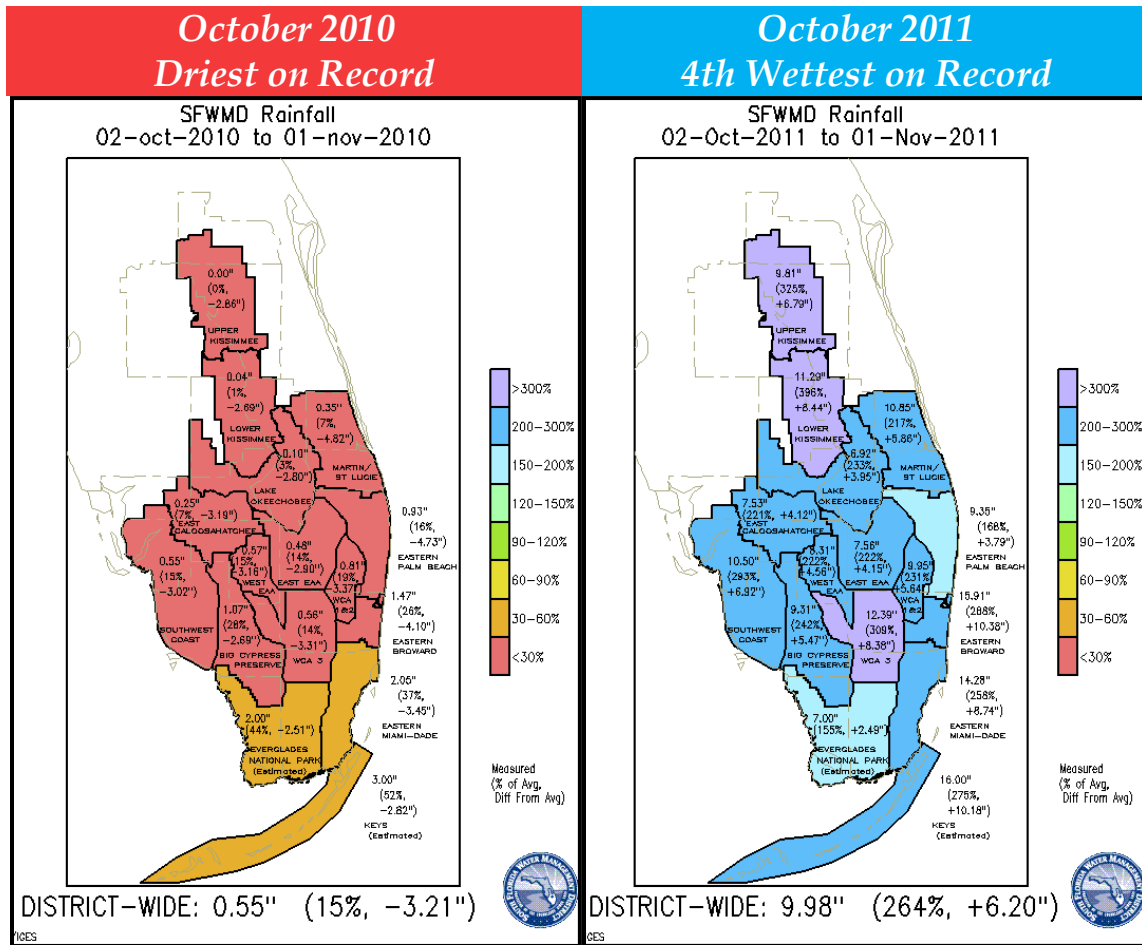
South Florida Water Management District

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A Tale of Two Octobers: From Record Dry to Near-Record Wet Drought in 2010 to deluge in 2011 highlights the challenges of water management in South Florida



(Click on the graphics for a larger version.)

West Palm Beach, FL – October 2011 ranks as the fourth-wettest October in 80 years of South Florida recordkeeping, bookending a 12-month period that began in 2010 with the driest October on record, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) reported today.

As a result of three uncommon storms in one month, nearly 10 inches of rain was recorded District-wide for October, representing 6.2 inches above the average for this time of year. All areas from Orlando to the Florida Keys received above-average rainfall, with key regions such as the Kissimmee basins and Water Conservation Areas 2 and 3 receiving a much-needed boost.

In comparison, October 2005 saw a total of 7.98 inches of rain — including Hurricane Wilma. The storm left an average of 4.16 inches of rain across the District.

October's storms did significantly benefit Lake Okeechobee, a key backup water supply for millions of South Floridians. The lake stood at 13.60 feet NGVD on Wednesday, close to the same level as this time last year. Unlike last year, the lake is rising instead of falling. The current level is more than 2 feet higher than on September 30 but still below the historical average of 15.03 inches.

“The decisions we make every day in water management consider the potential for weather that can swerve from record dry to record deluge in a relatively short timeframe,” said Susan Sylvester, SFWMD Chief of the Water Control Operations Bureau. “Our challenge is to continually plan, adjust and operate the extensive South Florida system to best balance the needs of 7.7 million people, businesses and the natural system.”

October is a crucial transition from the wet season to the dry season because of its potential impact on regional water levels for months to come. October 2011 was defined by three exceptional storm events that significantly bolstered water levels in drought-plagued Lake Okeechobee, aquifers and storage areas across the region.

The storms included:

- **October 8:** This was the wettest single day in the upper and lower Kissimmee basins combined in nearly 100 years. An average of 6.05 inches of rain fell in the two basins, spanning approximately 3,000 square miles, with local maximums up to 14.09 inches. The Kissimmee River was closed to navigation for about two weeks because of dangerous water flows. Navigation was restored when conditions became safe again.
- **October 16 - 18:** A non-tropical low pressure system and a stalled front combined to leave South Florida with an average of 2.74 inches of rain across the District. The rain primarily fell south of Lake Okeechobee, mainly missing the already

October Rainfall

Historical Average = 3.78 inches
(Last 5 Years)

- 2011 — 9.98 inches
- **2010 — 0.55 inches**
- 2009 — 2.60 inches
- 2008 — 3.74 inches
- 2007 — 5.02 inches

drenched Kissimmee region. The lower Florida Keys saw a maximum of 21.97 inches.

- **October 28 - 31:** Hurricane Rina reached the Yucatan Peninsula before several elements, including wind shear and cooler water temperatures, combined to weaken the storm and rip it apart. Remnant energy and moisture helped drench South Florida, with an average of 3.7 inches of rain over four days. Some areas in Broward and Miami-Dade counties reported more than 12 inches of torrential rain, and localized flooding was reported.

Despite the October storms, a forecast of below-average rainfall for the 2011-2012 dry season is cause for caution and continued water conservation. The region may still face water shortage conditions in the spring as a result.

For more information:

- [Latest Water Watch Briefing](#)
- [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.