



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS | Jacksonville District

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Corps to reduce flows from Lake Okeechobee

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Jacksonville District will reduce the amount of water flowing from Lake Okeechobee beginning this weekend.

Starting Friday (March 4), the new target flow for the Caloosahatchee Estuary is 4,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) as measured at Moore Haven Lock (S-77) located in the southwest part of the lake. The new target flow for the St. Lucie Estuary is 1,800 cfs as measured at St. Lucie Lock (S-80) near Stuart. Additional runoff from rain in the St. Lucie basin could occasionally result in flows that exceed targets.

“Lake levels have been falling as a result of water releases, decreased inflows, and drier conditions,” said Jim Jeffords, Jacksonville District Operations Division Chief. “Although the lake is still uncomfortably high for this time of year, our water control plan calls for lower flows based on current conditions. If the lake starts rising again, we may have to increase flows; it all depends on the weather.”

Today, the lake stage is 15.83 feet, down more than a half foot since it peaked at 16.40 feet on February 8. The Corps will continue to monitor conditions and adjust flows as necessary to balance the competing needs and purposes for water in Lake Okeechobee.

Additionally, Jacksonville District water managers are updating the formula used to calculate water flows through the spillway gates at the St. Lucie Lock structure. When drier conditions took hold during the latter part of February, water managers noticed an anomaly. In working with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), engineers determined that the reported flows through the spillway exceeded actual flows by 1,500-2,500 cfs.

“Our reported flows exceeded what was actually passing through the spillway gates,” said Jeffords. “At our request, the USGS conducted downstream measurements at St. Lucie and we have updated our formulas for computing discharge rates accordingly. We recognize the importance of this information and want to be sure it’s as accurate as possible.”

For more information on water level and flows data for Lake Okeechobee, visit the Corps’ water management website at <http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Missions/CivilWorks/WaterManagement.aspx>.

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