



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS | Jacksonville District

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Corps of Engineers adjusts Lake Okeechobee releases

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. –The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District modified water releases from Lake Okeechobee beginning at 7:00 a.m. this morning, July 23. The 14-day release has a new target flow to the St. Lucie Estuary, measured at St. Lucie Lock and Dam (S-80), of 730 cubic feet per second (cfs). The new target flow to the Caloosahatchee Estuary is 2,000 cfs. Flows to the west will be measured at the W.P Franklin Lock and Dam (S-79), which is located west of the previous measuring point, the Moore Haven Lock and Dam (S-77). These changes are in accordance with the 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (2008 LORS).

The Corps has closely monitored Lake Okeechobee water levels, and releases have been adjusted in response to changes in precipitation and inflows to the lake. Significant rainfall fell on the Lower Kissimmee River Basin (south of Lake Kissimmee) over the July 4 weekend, and the lake level rose from 13.89 ft NGVD on June 30 to 14.41 ft on July 11. On July 11 lake releases were increased to approximately 1,800 cfs to the east and 4,000 cfs to the west.

Lake Okeechobee's water level on July 22 was 14.10 ft, and at the end of the new release period on August 5, it is projected to be approximately at 13.80 ft.

“Because the lake level is still high, and seasonal predictions indicate releases are needed, we’ve decided to make releases up to 2,000 cfs to the west and 730 cfs to the east, said LTC Michael Kinard, Jacksonville District Deputy Commander for South Florida. “We know these rates are higher than what people who want us to protect the estuaries would like, but our goal is to keep the lake level on a downward trend to increase capacity for future storm events while reducing the likelihood of large fluctuations in releases. Available storage capacity will help us protect the Herbert Hoover Dike and public safety”

The 2008 LORS Water Control Plan Additional Operational Flexibility guidance allows for this type of adjustment to releases. The use of Additional Operational Flexibility requires specifying both a time period as well as a desired outcome for the release. The period of flow is 14 days, and the desired goal is to restore the storage capacity lost in the last significant rainfall event.

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“We’re going to keep a close eye on the lake and the Kissimmee River Basin. It appears that projections for Tropical Storm Bonnie don’t indicate significant rainfall in the Kissimmee basin. From the perspective of the lake level, that would be helpful.”

With Florida landfall of the Tropical Storm Bonnie expected to occur today, adjustments will be made to coastal discharges based on local basin runoff as needed.

For more information on water level and flow data for Lake Okeechobee and the Central and Southern Florida Project, visit the Corps’ water management page at <http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Divisions/Engineering/Branches/WaterResources/WaterMgt/index.htm>. For questions and inquiries, please contact Nanciann Regalado at 904.334.8954 (mobile) or nanciann.e.regalado@usace.army.mil.

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