

Minimum Flow and Level (MFLs) Talking Points For SFWMD Governing Board Meeting 11/10/2010

The MFL is designed to assure that minimum flows of freshwater are provided to the river and estuary during the annual dry season and droughts to prevent significant harm to the aquatic ecosystem.

Significant harm is caused by lack of, or insufficient, freshwater flow to balance the salinity of the water to protect seagrass, tapegrass and oyster habitats.

These habitats are critical to the survival of our native species of fish, shrimp and crabs.

The Caloosahatchee has already experienced losses. Lack of flow during the drought of 2001 resulted in the loss of over 300 acres of tapegrass habitat.

In the drought of 2008 the SFWMD cut off all flow to the Caloosahatchee, causing a toxic algae bloom upstream of the W.P. Franklin Lock that resulted in the shutdown of the Olga Water Treatment Plant.

Insufficient freshwater flow has caused algae blooms every year the river has been cut off or when insufficient water has been provided.

Too little water to the natural system, the District can allocate more water to other users at the expense of the natural system.

TAKE ACTION

We are asking the Governing Board to direct staff to proceed with updating the MFL.

District staff has a number of completed studies that identify flows needed at 450 cfs

District has referenced this higher flow level in numerous publications

Getting the water right depends on setting the right target.

The wrong target will: continue to damage the Caloosahatchee and estuary and cause the District to under allocate water to natural systems and over allocate to permitted users.