

Forecasted rain may require flows from C-43, C-44

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Jacksonville District will maintain the current release schedule from Lake Okeechobee, but heavy rain forecasted for the Lake Okeechobee waterway May 10 may require flows from the C-43 and C-44 canals to control water levels for flood control.

The Corps will continue planned releases from Lake Okeechobee through the W.P. Franklin Lock and Dam (S-79) to the Caloosahatchee estuary at a 7-day average rate of 650 cubic feet per second (cfs). The Corps plans zero releases to the St. Lucie estuary from Lake Okeechobee through the St. Lucie Lock and Dam (S-80).

Rainfall in the C-43 and C-44 basins can result in flows that exceed targets at S-79 or cause S-80 to open as the Corps releases water from the canals to maintain flood control. These decisions must sometimes be made quickly to address rapidly changing conditions in order to protect public health, safety, and property along the canals.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration forecast stated a high degree of certainty for heavy rain and potential for flooding over much of South Florida.

"The forecasted rainfall is more than we've seen in a while, and conditions can change quickly in an event like this," said Col. Andrew Kelly, Jacksonville District commander. "We want our stakeholders to be aware of these potential conditions which may require action, including a short term opening of S-80, by our lock operators in real-time to help protect the communities along the St. Lucie Canal from possible flooding. Our overall strategy remains unchanged for now, and we will continue to conserve water in Lake Okeechobee."

Today's lake stage is 11.25 feet NGVD. During the past week, lake levels have decreased by 0.19 feet, decreased by 0.37 feet in the past 30 days, and increased by 0.01 feet from last year. The Corps will continue to monitor conditions closely and adjust as necessary. The Corps will publicly announce any changes to planned releases from Lake Okeechobee.

Corps staff reported visible algae blooms at S-79 and Port Mayaca Lock and Dam (S-308) this week. The weekly update from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection that covered the week of April 24-30 stated that satellite imagery was partially obscured. From what was visible, Lake Okeechobee showed moderate bloom potential along the northwest shoreline and light bloom potential for the rest of the lake. The St. Lucie estuary was too obscured for an estimate, and the Caloosahatchee River showed no observable bloom activity.

The Corps of Engineers places information about algae conditions at our facilities and links to the FDEP dashboard that reports results from samples taken on Lake Okeechobee and the Okeechobee Waterway. Visit <https://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Algae/> for more.

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