

Revised Tentatively Selected Plan Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule Study

Overview & Update



US Army Corps
of Engineers
Jacksonville District



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Lake Okeechobee water levels are managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District, in coordination with the South Florida Water Management District. The regulation schedule now in effect is the Water Supply Environment (WSE) regulation schedule. Since the WSE was implemented in 2000, water managers have repeatedly been challenged by periods of unusually high precipitation and the inflexibility of the WSE to address extreme wet weather conditions.

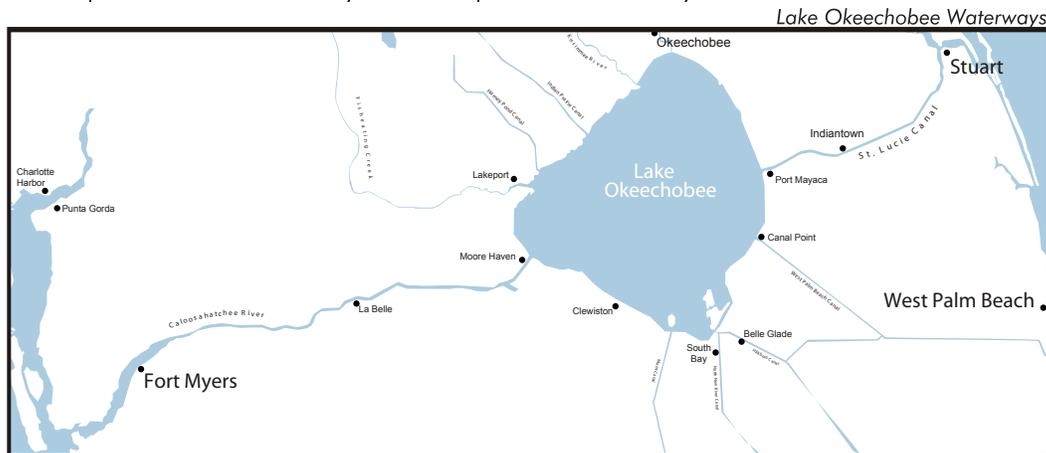
The WSE regulation schedule can delay water managers from making releases from the lake, a situation that is less than ideal. This delay results in high lake water levels requiring larger volume discharges to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries. Large discharges of Lake Okeechobee water can have devastating effects on the delicate balance of the estuaries.

The shortcomings of the WSE became apparent during the extreme rainy seasons of 2003 through 2005, when water levels in the lake rose between 17 and 18 feet NGVD. These high lake water levels caused considerable concern for the strength and stability of the Herbert Hoover Dike (HHD), the earthen levee that encircles Lake Okeechobee, and for the environmental health of Lake Okeechobee littoral zones.

Concern for the continued stability of the dike after multiple years of high water levels was growing. Public concern for the health of Lake Okeechobee, and the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries was also growing. As a result, in late 2005, the Corps made the decision to revisit the WSE. The Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule Study (LORSS) was started for the purpose of quickly developing a new regulation schedule that would allow operational changes based on the existing Central and South Florida Project infrastructure. The goal was a plan that would allow water managers more operational flexibility to better react to wet and dry conditions that regularly occur within the Lake Okeechobee / Kissimmee Basin. The plan would not require time-consuming construction, and could be implemented immediately after completion of the study.

LORSS Initial Tentatively Selected Plan

In September 2006, an initial tentatively selected plan (TSP) was presented to the public in a series of meetings. Stakeholders expressed a number of concerns, including the continued stability of the HHD and the protection of the valued estuaries. The Corps seriously considered the public's concerns and determined to revise the TSP plan to better-balance the competing demands on Lake Okeechobee and the needs of the lake, itself.



LORSS Second Draft TSP

In July 2007 a revised TSP was provided for public review. The LORSS interagency team, composed of engineers and scientists from the Corps, SFWMD, U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, City of Sanibel, Martin and Lee counties and many others identified this draft TSP as their preferred alternative.

A summary of the differences between the WSE, original TSP and the revised TSP is presented in the tables below.

36-year POR is 13,140 days			
Lake Stage			
	No Action/ WSE	Orig TSP	Revised TSP
Total Days			
> 16.5 feet	918	101	187 (reduced 731 days)
> 17.0	528	22	28 (reduced 500 days)
> 17.25	348	0	8 (reduced 340 days)
Lake Stage			
Peak	18.53	17.21	17.33 (reduced 1.2 feet)
Minimum	9.46	8.84	8.71 (lowered less than 1 foot)

The revised TSP effectively balances the needs of the entire system while continuing to, above all else, provide public safety. The TSP maintains the lake at safer water levels than the current regulation schedule, the WSE, would have allowed (except through case by case deviations). It allows for quicker response and operational flexibility to lake conditions and tributary inflows.

36-year POR is 432 months			
Coastal Estuary Releases			
	No Action/ WSE	Orig TSP	Revised TSP
Caloosahatchee			
> 450	198	105	131 (improved 67 months)
2800-4500 cfs	45	35	35 (reduced 10 months)
> 4500 cfs	29	35	29 (neutral)
St. Lucie			
2000-3000 cfs	43	38	42 (reduced 1 month)
> 3000 cfs	31	27	31 (neutral)

The original TSP was also fine-tuned to reduce the frequency and duration of high discharges, minimizing as much as possible impacts on the coastal estuaries. Water managers are listening to the public's concerns about moving more water south. The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) will ultimately provide the water storage and treatment components to do this. In the

interim, managers are constrained by the amount of water that can be moved.

Public comments will be taken in August 2007; the last day of the public comment period is August 20.

Once the revised regulation schedule is approved, it will provide for a higher level of safety to lake communities, improve Lake Okeechobee environmental conditions by managing the lake at lower elevations and provide for less damaging releases to coastal estuaries.

Once implementation of the 2007 LORSS is initiated, water managers will immediately begin developing a new regulation schedule that will take advantage of planned CERP projects and an adjusted lake level afforded by the HHD rehabilitation.



For Further Information



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