



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**

Jacksonville District

# News Release

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

## **U.S ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS ENDS RELEASES FROM LAKE OKEECHOBEE**

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) ended a 10-day Level 1 pulse release from Lake Okeechobee to the Caloosahatchee River and the St. Lucie Canal this morning Wednesday, Jan. 11, 2006, temporarily discontinuing releases from the lake to the estuaries. These past releases were part of a transition approach to maintaining a downward trend in the lake's water level.

The Corps is in the process of obtaining a temporary deviation to the existing Water Supply and Environmental (WSE) regulation schedule. This deviation will allow for up to level 1 pulse releases when the decision tree calls for no releases. Similar temporary deviations were used in 2004 and 2005. This deviation is an attempt to lower Lake Okeechobee and reduce the risk of high freshwater discharges to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries.

In the very active 2004 Hurricane season the temporary deviation removed an additional 0.8 feet off Lake Okeechobee. Without the deviation the lake could have risen to 19 feet. In the historical 2005 Hurricane season the deviation removed an additional 0.8 feet off Lake Okeechobee. Without the deviation the lake could have risen to 18 feet. It should also be noted that the removal of water from Lake Okeechobee during the previous temporary deviations was done at the Level 1 or less

pulse release. Had the deviation not been done, the release of water from Lake Okeechobee to the estuaries would have been done at a higher constant release.

Pulse releases are designed to mimic nature and provide discharges from the lake to the estuaries via the St. Lucie Canal to the east and the Caloosahatchee River to the west. The goal is to strike a balance between the health of the lake's littoral zone and the health of the estuaries.

In 10 days, a Level 1 pulse release to the Caloosahatchee River can lower the lake 0.07 ft. (average of 1,600 cfs/day); a Level 2 release can lower it by 0.10 ft. (average of 2,300 cfs/day); and a Level 3 by 0.13 ft. (average of 3,000 cfs/day).

In 10 days, a Level 1 pulse release to the St. Lucie Canal can lower the lake 0.03 ft. (average of 730 cfs/day); a Level 2 can lower it by 0.04 ft. (average of 950 cfs/day); and a Level 3 by 0.05 ft. (average of 1,170 cfs/day).

In the future, the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), will provide storage for much of this water and minimize the need for these types of releases.

Today's lake level is 15.44 feet, which is 0.07 feet lower than the average for this time of the year based on the years from 1992 through 2000. The level is now in Zone D of the WSE (Water Supply/Environment) regulation schedule, the set of federal guidelines used to manage the lake. When in Zone D, water managers generally proceed with releases to maintain decreasing lake levels.

Water level data for Lake Okeechobee and the Central and Southern Florida Project can be found on the water management page on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Jacksonville District web site at <http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/h2o/>. The Corps will also post to our web page a courtesy draft of the temporary deviation request.

For further information, please call the Jacksonville District Corporate Communications Office at 904-232-2236 or (cell) 904-614-4976.

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