



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**

Jacksonville District

# News Release

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

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

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District began another 10-day Level 1 pulse release this morning from Lake Okeechobee to the Caloosahatchee River and the St. Lucie Canal.

This measure was approved by the Corps' South Atlantic Division in Atlanta as a "temporary planned deviation" from the lake's normal operating procedures. These are set by the Corps' Water Control Plan for Lake Okeechobee and Everglades Agricultural Area, known as Water Supply/Environment (WSE).

This deviation gives water managers the authority to make additional releases up to a Level 1 pulse through Dec. 31, 2006. Similar temporary deviations have been used for the past two years.

A deviation last year removed more than 0.8 ft. of water out of Lake Okeechobee. Without the deviation the lake could have risen to more than 18 ft-NGVD (National Geodetic Vertical Datum). Jacksonville District strives to maintain the lake level below 17.5 feet to protect human life and property.

In the very active 2004 hurricane season, a similar deviation removed an additional 0.8 feet of water out of Lake Okeechobee. Without the deviation, the lake could have risen to 19 ft-NGVD.

Today's deviation is an attempt to lower Lake Okeechobee and minimize the need for large freshwater discharges to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Estuaries during this upcoming wet season.

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 last two days of the 10-day, Level 1 pulse release consists of an average daily flow of 500 cfs to the Caloosahatchee and no releases to the St. Lucie. 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 and the St. Lucie canal can lower the lake 0.10 ft.; a Level 2 release can lower it by 0.14 ft.; and a Level 3 by 0.18 ft.

Today's lake level is 15.36 feet-NGVD, which is 0.54 feet higher than this time last year, and 0.07 feet lower than last week.

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

Jacksonville District has begun an in-depth study of the decision-making process for Lake Okeechobee freshwater releases. Issues being scrutinized include weather patterns, hurricane season predictions, impacts on the estuarine ecosystem, water supply, lake ecology, and input from Kissimmee River Basin regulatory discharges. The next public workshop on this study is set for May 31, 2006 in Clewiston.

Water level data and flows for Lake Okeechobee and the Central and Southern Florida Project can be found on the Jacksonville District web site, water management page, at <http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/h2o/index.htm>.

For further information, please call the Jacksonville District Corporate

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