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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LAKE OKEECHOBE ROSE THREE INCHES FROM ERNESTO

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – After the passage of Tropical Storm Ernesto earlier this week, Lake Okeechobee rose three inches due to the storm, according to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers water managers.

“Since the storm never developed as had been forecast, the rise on the lake was minimal,” said Jacksonville District Water Management Chief John Zediak. “As the storm approached the lake, it increased the speed at which it was moving by a few miles per hour, thus dropping less rain than it would have at its original rate of speed.

“The current situation is good in a number of ways. Central Florida received some much-needed rain and we are still in great shape for the remainder of the hurricane season.”

Zediak explained that much storage capacity remains in the Kissimmee River basin since it did not receive much rain during the same period. He said from this point, roughly mid-way of the hurricane season, the lake could still receive repeats of either the 2004 or 2005 hurricane seasons and “still be in good shape.”

Post-storm inspections of Herbert Hoover Dike, which surrounds the lake, showed no problems with the integrity of the structure.

Zediak noted that an area west of Moore Haven and Clewiston received the most rainfall from the storm and that local runoff to the Caloosahatchee River resulted in high

flows at the W.P. Franklin Lock (S-79). Prior to the storm, the river upstream from the lock was lowered in preparation for expected runoff from the rainfall. As the runoff reached the river, gates and lock chambers were opened to their maximums to minimize impacts.

The Corps also said that no freshwater releases from Lake Okeechobee into the Caloosahatchee or St. Lucie rivers have been made recently or are planned in the near future.