



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**
Jacksonville District

MEDIA ADVISORY

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P.O. Box 4970 Jacksonville, FL 32232-0019

Contact: Steven Wright
Phone: 904-232-1628 FAX: 904-232-2237
Email: steven.e.wright@usace.army.mil

FOR: ALL SOUTH FLORIDA MEDIA OUTLETS

TO: ALL EDITORS, NEWS DIRECTORS, REPORTERS

EVENT: STATUS OF LAKE OKEECHOBEE

WHEN: FRIDAY, AUGUST 29, 2008

Going into the holiday weekend, the rise in Lake Okeechobee's level, caused by the effects of Tropical Storm Fay, has slowed. In the last week, the lake rose 1.3 ft., with a rise of 0.09 ft. in the last 24 hours. This compares to the largest Tropical Storm Fay-related 24-hour rise of .42 ft. on Aug. 20. Currently, the lake level stands at 14.13 ft. NGVD and is not expected to reach 15 ft. NGVD in the near term without further precipitation. The historic average height for August 29 of 14.18 ft. NGVD is slightly above the current lake level.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues to keep its spillway gates at Moore Haven on the Caloosahatchee River and Port Mayaca on the St. Lucie Canal closed. By not releasing water from the lake, the Corps is helping to reduce the amount of flooding downstream from the lake in the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Canal drainage areas. Gates are open to release water at three Corps navigation structures downstream from the lake, to promote drainage of local basin runoff. These navigation structures are the St. Lucie Lock and Dam, Ortona Lock and Dam and the W.P Franklin Lock and Dam.

Additionally, the Corps has lifted navigation restrictions on the Okeechobee Waterway. Navigation had been limited due to low water levels resulting from previous drought conditions. With Lake Okeechobee elevation at 14.13 ft. NGVD today, sufficient draft is now available, including Lake Okeechobee Route 1, and normal operations are in place, allowing transit for commercial and



recreational vessels. Route 2 (Rim Canal) remains closed due to debris remaining from previous hurricanes.

Both the St. Lucie and Port Mayaca locks have also reopened for commercial and recreational traffic. The locks had been previously closed for maintenance and installation of manatee protection equipment.

Mariners are advised that navigation through the Okeechobee Waterway could change on short notice, due to direct and indirect impacts from storm systems.

The Corps is closely monitoring potential tropical storm events that might bring additional rainfall to the Lake Okeechobee area. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers would like begin low-level releases next week from Lake Okeechobee; however, flows from natural runoff in the Caloosahatchee River and St. Lucie Canal are not subsiding at a level needed to proceed with the low-level releases.

The Corps inspected the Herbert Hoover Dike after heavy rainfall from Tropical Storm Fay and found no significant issues with the dike as a result of the storm.

The target operating range for the lake is between 12.5 and 15.5 feet, which is a safe range for the dike and balances the diverse needs of South Florida, such as the health of the lake and coastal estuaries, water supply and recreation.