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Jacksonville District

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS CONTINUES VIGILANT WATCH OVER LAKE OKEECHOBEE AND HERBERT HOOVER DIKE

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – Lake Okeechobee nudged over the 15-foot mark to a level of 15.07 on Sunday due to rainfall associated with Hurricane Hanna. Today the lake barely edged up to its current level of 15.10, marking the second straight day the rate of rise on the lake has decreased. “In making these releases in accordance with our new Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule, our goal was to stem the rate of rise of the lake’s level, and we are seeing success,” said Col. Paul Grosskruger, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District.

Though Hurricane Ike changed course, reducing the potential for negative effects upon Lake Okeechobee and the Kissimmee River Basin, Grosskruger said that the Corps remains vigilant.

“Public safety is our number one priority,” Grosskruger said. “With that in mind, the Corps is in constant contact and coordination with the South Florida Water Management District and local and county governments to be responsive, alert and aware.”

Protecting the health of the St. Lucie and the Caloosahatchee rivers and estuaries is also a key factor influencing the Corps’ management decisions. “We confer with area freshwater ecologists and



marine scientists before we decide whether or not to make releases from Lake Okeechobee,” added Grosskruger. “We remain in regular contact with the local experts throughout each release period.”

The Corps will continue current low-level water releases from Lake Okeechobee through Sept. 14. The average daily release is 1,800 cubic feet per second on the St. Lucie River and 4,000 cubic feet per second on the Caloosahatchee River. “These low-level releases are being pulsed, to mimic a rainfall event in an effort to minimize any adverse affect on the estuaries,” Grosskruger said.

In 2005, Lake Okeechobee stood at 15.5 feet prior to the arrival of Hurricane Wilma and rose 1.62 feet as a result of the storm. The previous year, in October 2004, the lake stood at 14.78 before a series of storms caused the lake rise to 18.02 feet.

Herbert Hoover Dike (HHD) has helped to protect millions of south Florida residents for 70 years. However, over the years, extreme rain events and high water levels took a toll on the 143-mile dike and the Corps resumed major construction of its rehabilitation project in 2007. A seepage berm and internal cutoff wall will strengthen the dike and ensure the continued protection of lakeside communities.

The height of the massive HHD varies from 32 feet to 45 feet, at least 17 feet above today’s lake level. At its base, the width of the dike averages 250 feet, and the width at the top of the structure is 20 feet. After Tropical Storm Fay, the Corps inspected HHD and found no significant issues with the dike as a result of the storm. Throughout hurricane season, the Corps conducts periodic inspections of HHD to monitor its condition and stockpiles stone at key locations around the structure, to enable immediate response if repairs are necessary. To date, no such repairs have been required.

Further information on Lake Okeechobee and Hebert Hoover Dike is available on the Jacksonville District Web site at www.saj.usace.army.mil or by calling the Corporate Communication Office at 904-232-2236 or 904-614-4976.

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