

RIVERS COALITION UPDATE – February 27, 2014

Lake Okeechobee Conditions

As of Tuesday, Lake Okeechobee is at 13.98 feet NGVD

Lake stage showed a net decrease of 0.03 feet over the past seven days. It is now 0.18 feet higher than it was a month ago and 0.43 feet lower than it was a year ago

The Lake is currently in the low sub-band and 0.56 feet below the historical average for this date and 0.63 feet above the LORS 2008 simulated average.

Current Lake inflow is approximately 1333 cfs consisting of flows from S-65E (Kissimmee River and S135 (L-47) and minimal amounts from Fisheating Creek.

Outflows from the Lake total approximately 837 cfs exiting through the S77 and L8.

The February foraging survey was conducted last Thursday. Just over 4,700 wading birds in 27 flocks were found foraging on the lake. Compared to the January survey there was a decrease of about 4,300 foraging birds. This decrease was most likely due to the fact that the wetlands surrounding the lake were reflooded with the recent rains making more foraging habitat available. The birds are most likely foraging in these newly hydrated areas.

The preliminary snail kite survey of the northern and western areas of Lake Okeechobee indicates that there are twelve snail kite nests.

Over the past three weeks Lake stage has been relatively stable with little to no recession. However, the lake is still in the ecologically desirable stage envelope. As the wading bird nesting season begins, the desire is to maintain a monthly recession rate of 0.5 feet through May or June. A steady recession rate is also beneficial to snail kites. Since apple snail recruitment is dependent on lower lake stages, particularly in the March to June time frame.

District News

February 13, 2014 – Governing Board Meeting

The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) held its monthly Governing Board meeting this month in Fort Myers and received an update on water resource projects to benefit the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary.

Approved the FY2014 Five-Year Capital Improvements Plan. The FY2014 Five-Year Capital Improvements Plan will be published in the 2014 South Florida Environmental Report, Volume II, Chapter 4. The FY2014 Five-Year CIP identifies the following: the capital projects contained in the FY2014 adopted budget, an FY2014 adjusted

projection based on updated cash flow projections, and planned future capital projects for the period of FY2015 through FY2018.

Upcoming Meetings

February 28

Upper East Coast Water Supply Plan Workshop – Water Resource Caution Area Amendment

1 p.m., Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council, 421 S.W. Camden Ave., Stuart

March 5

Lake Belt Mitigation Committee

10 a.m., SFWMD B-2 1st Floor EMD Training Room, 3301 Gun Club Road, West Palm Beach

March 6

Water Resources Advisory Commission Meeting

9 a.m., SFWMD B-1 Auditorium, 3301 Gun Club Road, West Palm Beach

March 12

Governing Board Workshop

1 p.m., SFWMD B-1 Auditorium, 3301 Gun Club Road, West Palm Beach

March 13

Governing Board Meeting

9 a.m., SFWMD B-1 Auditorium, 3301 Gun Club Road, West Palm Beach

March 17

Water Resources Advisory Commission Recreational Issues Workshop

5 p.m., SFWMD B-1 Auditorium, 3301 Gun Club Road, West Palm Beach

March 19

Public Meeting to Discuss Regulatory Matters

10 a.m., SFWMD B-1 Storch Conference Room, 3301 Gun Club Road, West Palm Beach

GOVERNOR SCOTT'S BUDGET RECOMMENDS \$1.4 BILLION TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE FLORIDA'S ENVIRONMENT

~Funding for Everglades, spring and land conservation~

TALLAHASSEE – Today, Governor Rick Scott highlighted his commitment to protect, preserve and improve Florida's environment. The Governor's "It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget" will include support for restoration projects in the Everglades, springs protection improvements, and the purchase of conservation lands. The FY2014/2015 budget places a priority on protecting the health of Florida's natural resources.

"By proposing more than a billion dollars, Governor Scott recognizes the Department's commitment to preserving the environment through sound science," said Florida Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard Jr. "This significant funding will ensure the Department's ability to continue to safeguard and protect the state's natural resources."

Proposed budget items include:

\$180 million investment to restore the Everglades and Florida Keys. Governor Scott has been laser-focused on Everglades restoration. This continues funding for the Governor's landmark \$880 million Everglades water quality plan. The \$180 million also includes \$40 million to speed up completion of the C-44 Stormwater Treatment Area for Martin and St. Lucie counties, and provide the first \$30 million - in a three year installment - for the Tamiami Trail project, providing needed water to Everglades National Park. In addition, the investment of these funds will allow for the completion of the Kissimmee River restoration project, which will improve the environmental health of the area north and south of Lake Okeechobee, the Lake itself, and Lee, Charlotte, Martin and St. Lucie counties. Lastly, \$50 million will support improvements to the Florida Keys wastewater system, helping to protect the coral reefs and water quality of the Keys.

\$286 million for restoring waterways and water supply. This funding represents a continued commitment to assisting Florida's communities with "getting the water right." More than \$276 million is provided for wastewater/stormwater facility construction, drinking water facility construction and water quality planning. Additionally \$9.4 million is provided to continue setting nutrient limits and developing restoration plans for Florida's waters at a record pace. Under Governor Scott's leadership, the Department has implemented the most comprehensive numeric nutrient criteria in the nation.

\$55 million for springs restoration. The "It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget" commits \$55 million for springs restoration, protection and preservation, with \$50 million invested in springs protection projects and to address significant groundwater issues in and around springs. Since 2011, Governor Scott has specifically directed more funding to springs protection than any Administration in Florida's history to protect and restore these natural treasures.

\$70 million for Florida Forever. The Governor's budget recommends \$30 million in cash and an additional \$40 million in budget authority from the proceeds of the sale of surplus non-conservation lands owned by the state. This investment to purchase conservation lands needed for springs protection, military buffering or water resource protection will allow Floridians to enjoy our natural treasures.

\$125 million for Petroleum Tank Cleanup. This funding will support a more efficient and effective petroleum tanks restoration program. DEP will competitively procure contracts providing a better value for the Florida taxpayer.

\$25 million for beach erosion control. The Governor's budget will manage and nourish Florida's beautiful beaches. The local government partners responsible for the state's most valuable and recognizable natural resource will benefit from state assistance for beach and dune restoration, beach nourishment, inlet sand bypassing and regional sediment management.

\$19 million for state park improvements. The funding for state park repairs, renovations and development will keep Florida State Parks on the map. This includes \$4 million in ADA access improvements. Florida is the only state to be awarded three National Gold Medals for Excellence by the National Recreation and Parks Association.

In addition, Governor Scott's "It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget" provides \$1 million to protect Florida's manatees. The Oceanaria Reimbursement Assistance Program, which is managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, works to rescue, rehabilitate and release manatees to support their adult population, which is key to the survival of the species.