

## RIVERS COALITION UPDATE – April 17, 2014

### **Lake Okeechobee Conditions**

As of Tuesday, Lake Okeechobee is at 13.29 feet NGVD

Lake stage showed a net decrease of 0.16 feet over the past seven days. It is now 0.41 feet lower than it was a month ago and 0.35 feet lower than it was a year ago

The Lake is currently in the Base Flow Operational Band and 0.72 feet below the historical average for this date and 0.52 feet above the LORS 2008 simulated average.

Current Lake inflow is approximately 1300 cfs consisting of flows from S-65E (Kissimmee River and S133 (Taylor Crk) and minimal amounts from Fisheating Creek.

Outflows from the Lake total approximately 1740 cfs a majority of that exiting through the S351, S352, S354 and L8 (southern structures).

The April foraging survey was conducted on Thursday (April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014). There were 8901 foraging birds in 30 flocks which is an increase from last month and higher than in 2013. There was a decline in numbers in February after the rain event at the end of January caused a reversal in lake stage but lake levels are currently declining and at beneficial level for foraging on the lake. A banded whooping crane was spotted during the flight. The sighting was reported to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and according to their records this is a 10 year old female that was hatched around Lake Kissimmee by captive reared cranes. She is one of the few remaining whooping cranes from the Florida non-migratory population and she was seen in Osceola County a few weeks ago. In 2011 there were 20 non-migratory whooping cranes in the Florida population but the most recent survey (April 2<sup>nd</sup>) found only 10.

The April 2014 snail kite update from The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission indicates that to date there are 27 snail kite nests on Lake Okeechobee. Three nests have failed, four nests are classified as successful, one nest is in the building stages and the remaining seventeen are either incubating eggs or have nestlings. The reported heights of these nests above water suggest that none of them are in imminent danger. There is also one nest incubating in the Eagle Bay marsh just outside and adjacent to the lake on the north end.

March chlorophyll and algal bloom data indicate that there were light to moderate bloom conditions in the southern region and in Fisheating Bay. However no cyanotoxin values were greater than the detectable limit. Both total phosphorus (TP) and total suspended solid (TSS) concentrations were similar (very slight increase) to February values reflecting similar wind conditions during the past two months.

Over the past two months the recession rate has been below the desired rate of 0.5 feet. However, the lake is still in the ecologically desirable stage envelope and the

overall conditions are good. As the wading bird nesting season continues, the desire is to maintain a monthly recession rate of 0.5 feet through May or June and avoid future reversals in Lake stage. A steady recession rate is also beneficial to snail kites and apple snail recruitment. Consequently, any activities that drain water from the Lake at a regular steady rate would benefit wading birds, snail kites and apple snails.

### **District News**

April 1<sup>st</sup> marked the annual start of Water Conservation Month. Each year the State of Florida and dozens of local governments join the District in promoting water conservation efforts during the month.

### **April 10, 2014 – Governing Board Meeting**

The Governing Board unanimously approved a resolution at its' April 10<sup>th</sup> meeting that supports the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' lead on the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP). The project is part of a long term solution for moving water south of Lake Okeechobee away from the northern coastal estuaries and into the heart of the Everglades.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

#### **May 6**

Water Resources Advisory Commission Meeting and Joint WRAC South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force SFERTF meeting 9 a.m., in Royal Palm Beach

#### **May 14**

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

#### **March 15**

Governing Board Meeting  
9 a.m., SFWMD B-1 Auditorium, 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.