

**Martin County Projects Update**  
**Rivers Coalition Meeting**  
**September 28, 2017 at 11 a.m., City of Stuart Commission Chambers**  
(Update provided by Dianne Hughes, Sr. Ecosystem Specialist, Ecosystem Restoration & Management Division)

**LAKE OKEECHOBEE CONDITIONS**

- Lake Okeechobee level is currently at 16.30 feet. 1 year ago the Lake was at 15.69 feet (.61 feet lower). The Lake has risen 2.80 feet in the past month largely due to rainfall associated with Hurricane Irma. There is still approximately 15,000 cfs entering the Lake from the Kissimmee Basin. This number was over 40,000 cfs in the immediate days after Hurricane Irma passed.
- Army Corps of Engineers commenced maximum practicable releases to St. Lucie Estuary on September 15th and to Caloosahatchee Estuary on September 19th.
- Army Corps trying to slow the rise of Lake Okeechobee given Herbert Hoover Dike safety concerns and remaining hurricane season.
- Extremely turbid water from Lake Okeechobee (average 72 NTU) is being released, which can be seen throughout the estuary out through the inlet to the ocean.
- We are waiting to see when the Lake will peak (potentially around 17 feet) to determine how long of a release event this could be. Based on past conditions and similar situations, it could last up to 3 months.
- SFWMD operated S-2, S-3, S-4 pump stations (aka "backpumping" into Lake Okeechobee) for protection of communities south of the Lake. That operation ceased as of 9/19/17. For the period of time of September 10-20, 8% of the total rise of Lake stage could be attributed to backpumping, with the remaining 92% of rise in Lake stage attributed to inflows from the Kissimmee.
- Temperatures at the Roosevelt Bridge are ranging in the past week from 84-87 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Salinities are pretty consistent, ranging from 0-10 ppt, with the higher salinities occurring during high tides.
- Commercial fisheries are reporting losses due to freshwater releases from Lake Okeechobee. Inshore fishing collapsed, kingfish season forced to end early and upcoming Spanish mackerel season impacted by freshwater. They expect to lose about one month of fishing, but will depend on how long the releases last.

**PROJECT UPDATE**

- Both pre- and post-Hurricane Irma, project assessments and inspections were completed county-wide. There were some failed culverts, but generally the stormwater facilities and structures fared well. County staff continues to work on repairing impacted facilities. FEMA is on the ground completing inspections to verify our requests for reimbursement.
- All American Ditch Stormwater Quality Retrofit Project - This approximately \$5 million project is ahead of schedule and on budget. It is expected to be complete and operational in the next few months.

**LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

- State Legislative Priorities will be discussed by the Martin County Board of County Commissioners at their regular meeting on October 10, 2017.

**PUBLIC OUTREACH**

- The Martin County Water Ambassador program will be offered on October 17, 2017 at the IFAS/Extension office from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm. Register at <https://waterambassador.eventbrite.com>.