



Lake Okeechobee Watershed Program  
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May 20, 2009

Ms. Carol Wehle  
Executive Director  
South Florida Water Management District  
3301 Gun Club Road  
West Palm Beach, FL 33416-4680

Dear Ms. Wehle:

Audubon submits this letter in reference to water management in the Caloosahatchee watershed as Florida transitions from the dry to the wet season. We appreciate you and your staff's efforts, at the South Florida Water Management District's (SFWMD) May Governing Board meeting, to advise the board of the myriad considerations in making water releases from Lake Okeechobee to the Caloosahatchee Estuary during the end of this dry season. In spite of this week's rain, water rationing to the Lake Okeechobee Service Area (LOSA) has been authorized and the estuary may remain saltier than desired.

Audubon recommends that Dr. Peter Doering, Chief Environmental Scientist of the SFWMD's Coastal Ecosystems Division, and his group define the desirable salinity profile for the Caloosahatchee for this time of year. If the estuary becomes or remains saltier than the profile, we ask that a pulse release be made from Lake Okeechobee to the estuary, as authorized by the Governing Board. We understand that users in LOSA are facing possible water restrictions and submit that, as the attached graph from Dean Powell's presentation to the board on May 14th shows, the salinity in the Caloosahatchee has been higher than desired for a couple months. This reflects that the estuary has already been under rationing for a while.

We also request that the SFWMD develop simple operational protocols for water in the C-43 between Lake Okeechobee (S-77) and the Ortona structure (S-78). During low-water periods on Lake Okeechobee, water often is backflowed from the C-43 into Lake Okeechobee to help refill the lake. In the past, however, this has occurred at times when the estuary needed that water to maintain appropriate salinity levels, or to flush out undesirable algae blooms. While refilling the lake is desirable, giving needed water from the Caloosahatchee watershed to the LOSA, harms the former for the benefit of the latter. This activity does not reflect the principles of balance or shared adversity. Audubon recommends that when the estuary is above its salinity envelope or needs a flush of fresh water to clear algae blooms, that C-43 water is moved downstream to benefit the estuary. Similarly, if the estuary is not experiencing these problems, C-43 water should be backflowed to refill the lake.

Thank you for considering these issues. Please contact me if you need further information.

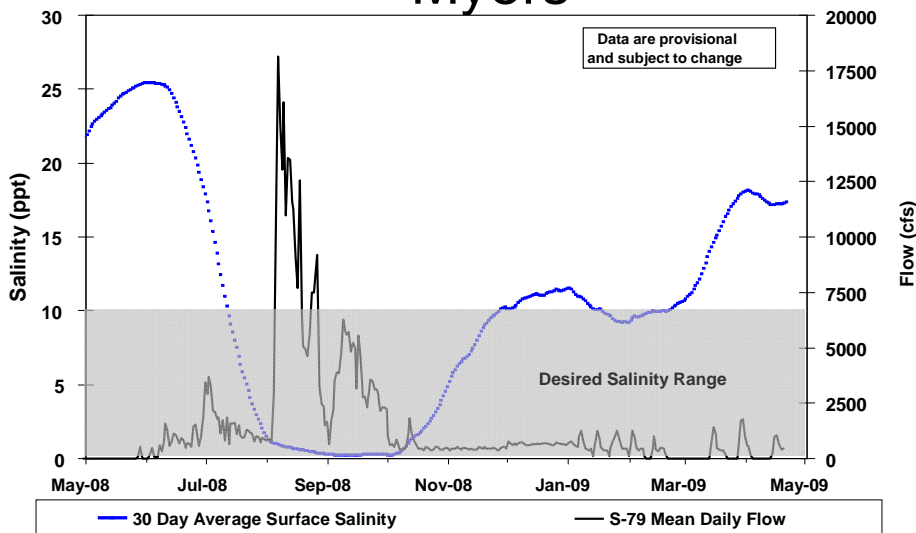
Sincerely,



Paul N. Gray, Ph.D.  
Science Coordinator  
Lake Okeechobee Watershed Program

Cc: SFWMD Governing Board members  
Col. Paul Grosskruger, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

## Caloosahatchee Salinity Ft. Myers



Salinities have remained above the desired range in the Caloosahatchee Estuary since March, in spite of beneficial pulse releases from Lake Okeechobee. (From Dean Powell's May 14, 2009 presentation to the SFWMD Governing Board.)