MEMORANDUM

To: USACE Colonel James L. Booth, Major Cory Bell, Richard McMillen, SFWMD Governing Board, Executive Director Drew Bartlett, Jennifer Reynolds, Lawrence Glenn, DEP Secretary Shawn Hamilton

From: Periodic Scientists Conference Call Participants
Kevin Godsea & Avery Renshaw - J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Complex
Holly Milbrandt & Dana Dettmar - City of Sanibel
Harry Phillips & Maya Robert - City of Cape Coral
Allie Pecenka, Rick Bartleson PhD, Matt Depaolis & Leah Reidenbach - Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation
In coordination with Lee County

Subject: Caloosahatchee & Estuary Conditions Report

Reporting Period: **April 23 – 29, 2024**

This report provides a scientific assessment of Caloosahatchee River and Estuary conditions and how these conditions affect the health, productivity, and function of the system.

Caloosahatchee Conditions Summary: Flow to the Caloosahatchee Estuary had a 7-day average of **2,031 cfs** at **S-79** with a 7-day average of **2,192 cfs (100%)** coming from the lake at **S-77**. **The 14-day moving average flow at S-79 is 2,013 cfs and has been in the optimum flow envelope** (750 – 2,100 cfs) for **14 days**. The 14-day average flow at S-77 was **2,086 cfs.**

Recommendation: On April 13, The Army Corps began targeting a 7-day average pulse release schedule of 2,000 cfs at W.P. Franklin Lock and Dam (S-79) and 0 cfs St. Lucie Lock and Dam (S-80). While we are supportive of this decision, we remain concerned with the high lake stage, the efficacy of the dry season strategy to reduce lake levels, and the potential for high-volume releases this summer/ fall. We ask the Army Corps to remain reactive to changing conditions in Lake Okeechobee and the Caloosahatchee River and estuary, and adjust flows as needed to support the ecological health of this system. In addition, we recommend The Corps develop and implement a long-term strategy, equitable to all stakeholders, to decrease lake levels.

USACE Action: With Lake Okeechobee stage within the Low Sub-band, the Tributary Hydrologic Conditions in the Normal category, the Seasonal Lake Okeechobee Net Inflow outlook in the Wet category, and the Multi-Seasonal Lake Okeechobee Net Inflow Outlook in the Normal category, Part D of the 2008 LORS suggests "S-79 up to 450 cfs and S-80 up to 200 cfs". On 4/13/24 the USACE began targeting a 7-day average pulse release schedule of 2,000 cfs at W.P. Franklin Lock and Dam (S-79) and 0 cfs St. Lucie Lock and Dam (S-80).

Lake Flows: In the past 7 days the total outflow from Lake Okeechobee was 69792 **AF*** with 30,484 **AF** to the Caloosahatchee through **S-77**, **6 AF** to the St. Lucie canal though **S-308**, **1,264 AF** though the **L8 canal**, and 38,038 **AF** to the EAA through **S-351**, **S-352**, and **S-354**. The total net inflow to the Lake was 9,913 **AF** (**9,913 AF** from Fisheating Creek, S-71, S-72, S-84s, S-65EX, and S-65EX1). Water conservation areas received flows of **428 AF**, **283 AF**, and **0 AF** at **WCA1, WCA2, and WCA3**, respectively. Everglades National Park received **7,817 AF.**
***Data missing for S-310 from 4/23- 4/29, S-351 on 4/27, S-308 on 4/25, S-80 on 4/29 & S-65E on 4/26.**

Lake Level: 14.28 ft (Low Sub-Band) **Last Week**: **14.64 ft** **Last Year: 14.32 ft**

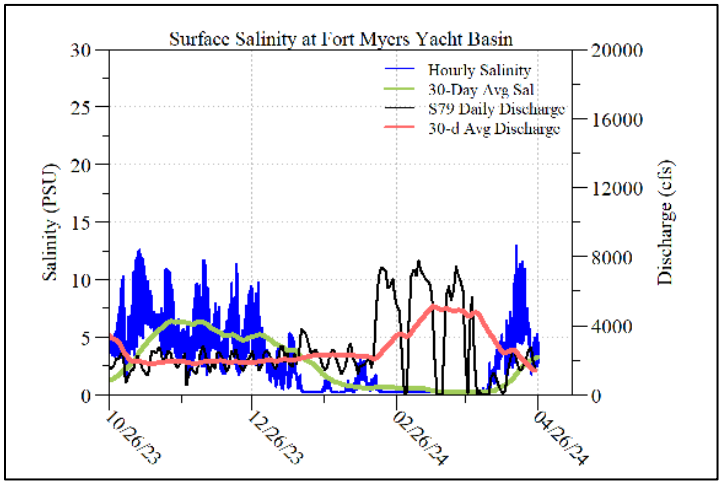
7-Day Lake Recession Rate: -0.36 ft/week

Lake Okeechobee Inflow: 777 cfs **Lake Okeechobee Outflow: 5,192 cfs**

Weekly Rainfall Total: **WP Franklin: 0.00"** **Ortona: 0.00"** **Moore Haven: 0.00"**

Cyanobacteria Status: On 4/29/24 sampling for cyanobacteria by the Lee County Environmental Lab reported moderately abundant *Microcystis* and *Dolichospermum* at the **Alva Boat Ramp** as streaks on the surface and upstream of the **Franklin Locks** as streaks with some accumulation along the lock/ shore. *Microcystis* and *Dolichospermum* were present at the **Davis Boat Ramp**, appearing as specks.

Red Tide: On 4/26/24, the FWC reported that the red tide organism, *Karenia brevis*, was observed at background concentrations in one sample from Northwest Florida over the past week. In **Southwest Florida** over the past week, *K. brevis* was **not observed.**



Light Penetration

Site	25% Iz	Target Values	Turbidity	Target Values
	meters		NTU	
Fort Myers	0.7	> 1	4.0	< 18
Shell Point	1.2	>2.2	1.3	< 18
Causeway	3.8	> 2.2	2.2	< 5

***25% Iz** is the depth (z) where irradiance (I) is 25% of surface irradiance. Target values indicate the depth of light penetration needed for healthy seagrass.*

Upper Estuary Conditions: The 30-day average surface salinity at the Fort Myers Yacht Basin was 3.8 psu, within the suitable range for tape grass.

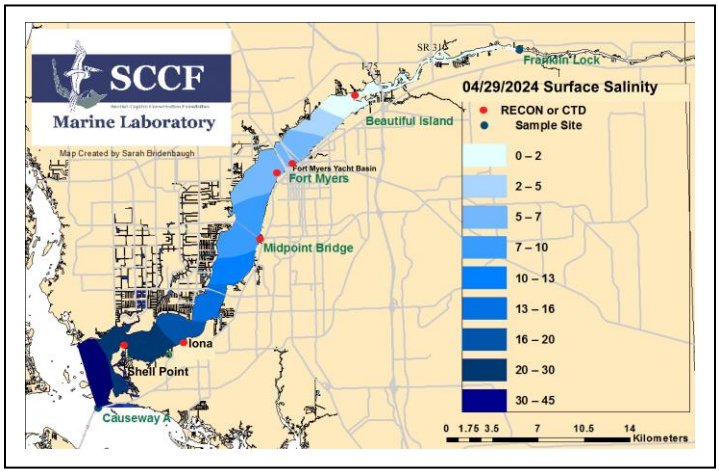
Lower Estuary Conditions: The average salinity at Shell Point RECON was 27 psu, in the optimal range for oysters and seagrass.

Water Quality Conditions:

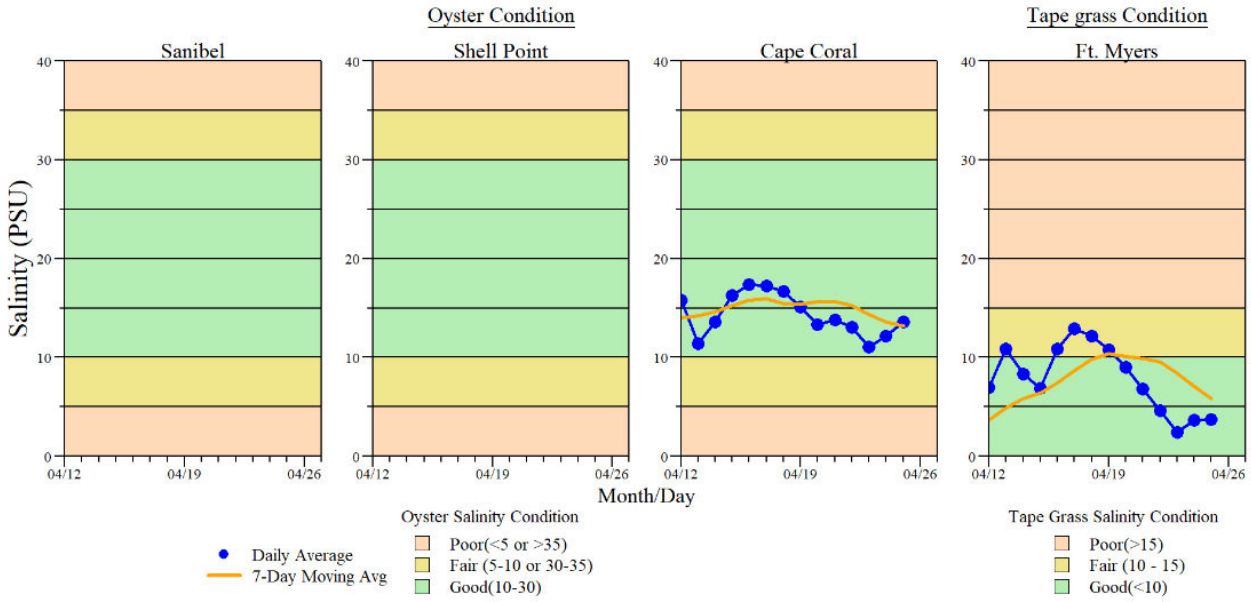
Monitor Site	Salinity (psu)[a] [previous week]	Diss O_2 (mg/L)[b]	FDOM (qsde)[c]	Chlorophyll (µg/L)[d]	Temperature (°F)
Beautiful Island	0.3- 0.9 [0.3- 0.9]	0.7 – 4.7	144 – 161	7.5	77.1 – 82.4
Fort Myers Yacht Basin	1.8 – 7.2 [2.8 - 13]	1.7 – 5.4	144 – 157	3.8	75.8– 82.8
Shell Point	15 – 34 [17 – 32]	4.9– 7.9	29.3 – 147	1.5	75.6 – 82.4
McIntyre Creek	29.7 – 32.2 [30.2 – 33.8]	3.5 – 8.6	37.1 – 77.4	1.6 – 3.5	73.1 – 81.9
Tarpon Bay	29.0 – 34.3 [30.6 – 34.5]	4.8 – 7.9	15.8 – 47.2	0.9 – 4.9	74.9 – 80.2
Wulfert Flats	30.7 – 33.3 [-------]	3.6 – 8.3	-------	2.7 – 17.7	72.3 – 80.6

Red values are outside of the preferred range.
[a] Salinity target values: BI < 5, FM < 10, SP = 10 – 30
[b] Dissolved O_2 target values: all sites > 4
[c] FDOM target values: BI < 70, FM < 70, SP < 11
[d] Chlorophyll target values: BI < 11, FM < 11, SP < 11
[s] Single sonde lower and surface layer or surface grab lab measurement
------- no data

Wildlife Impacts: In the past week, the CROW wildlife hospital on Sanibel admitted 1 patient with suspected red tide/toxicosis: 1 juvenile brown pelican (still in care).



ACOE Daily Reports			
Date	S79 Flow (cfs)	S78 Flow (cfs)	S77 Flow (cfs)
4/23/24	2771	2274	2624
4/24/24	2000	1653	2113
4/25/24	1526	1111	1855
4/26/24	1373	1018	1884
4/27/24	1711	1427	1969
4/28/24	2153	1782	2220
4/29/24	2682	2345	2682
7-day avg	2031	1659	2192



Daily average bottom salinity data for the last 14-days from sampling locations within the tidal Caloosahatchee River Estuary relative to oyster health (Sanibel, Shell Point and Cape Coral) and tape grass (*Vallisneria americana*) health (Ft. Myers only) conditions.

*Ft. Myers sensor is in the lower strata

Water clarity at Lighthouse Beach Park on 4/30 at 2:52 PM on a rising tide (2.7 ft.)