



## AGENDA MEMORANDUM

**Natural Resources  
Department**

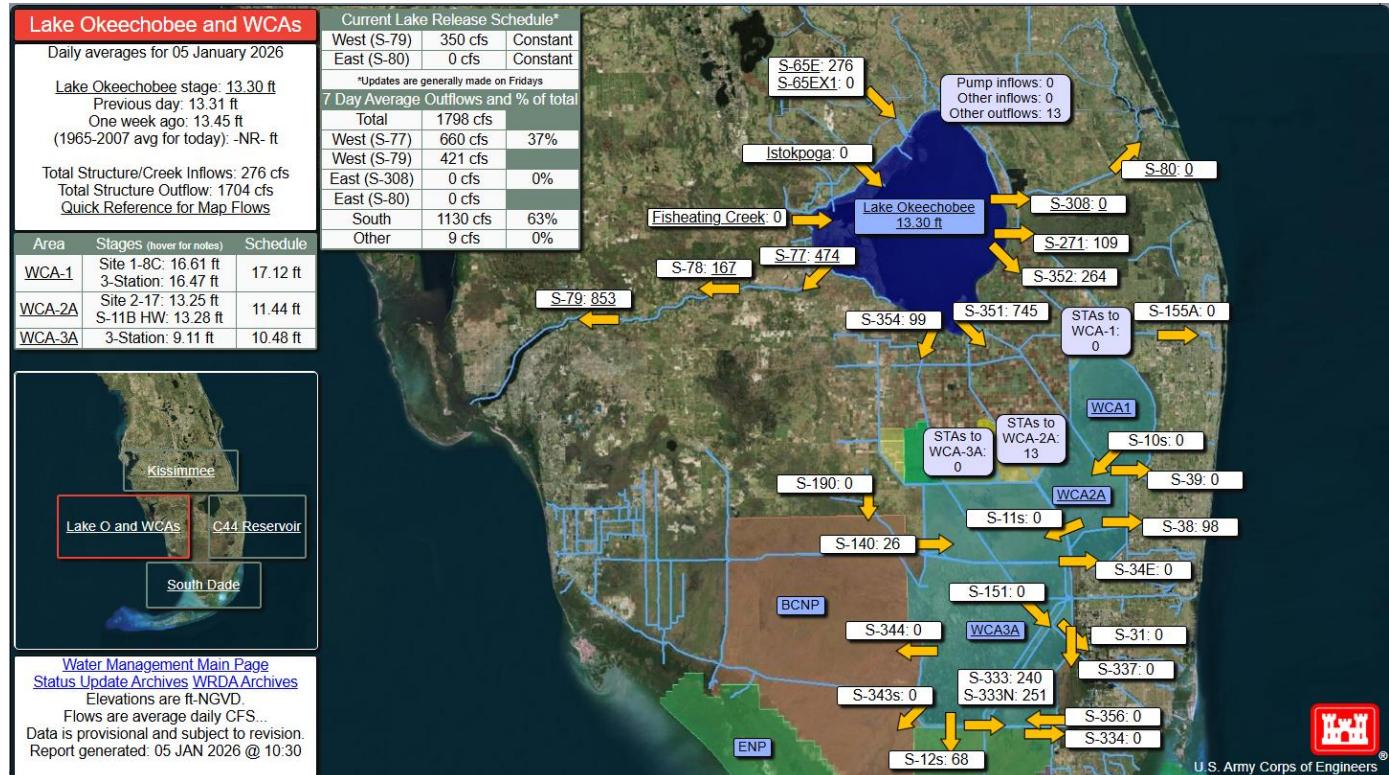
**City Council Regular Meeting Date: January 13, 2026**

**To:** City Council  
**From:** Holly Milbrandt, Natural Resources Director  
**Date:** January 5, 2026

**SUBJECT:** Natural Resources Water Quality Updates

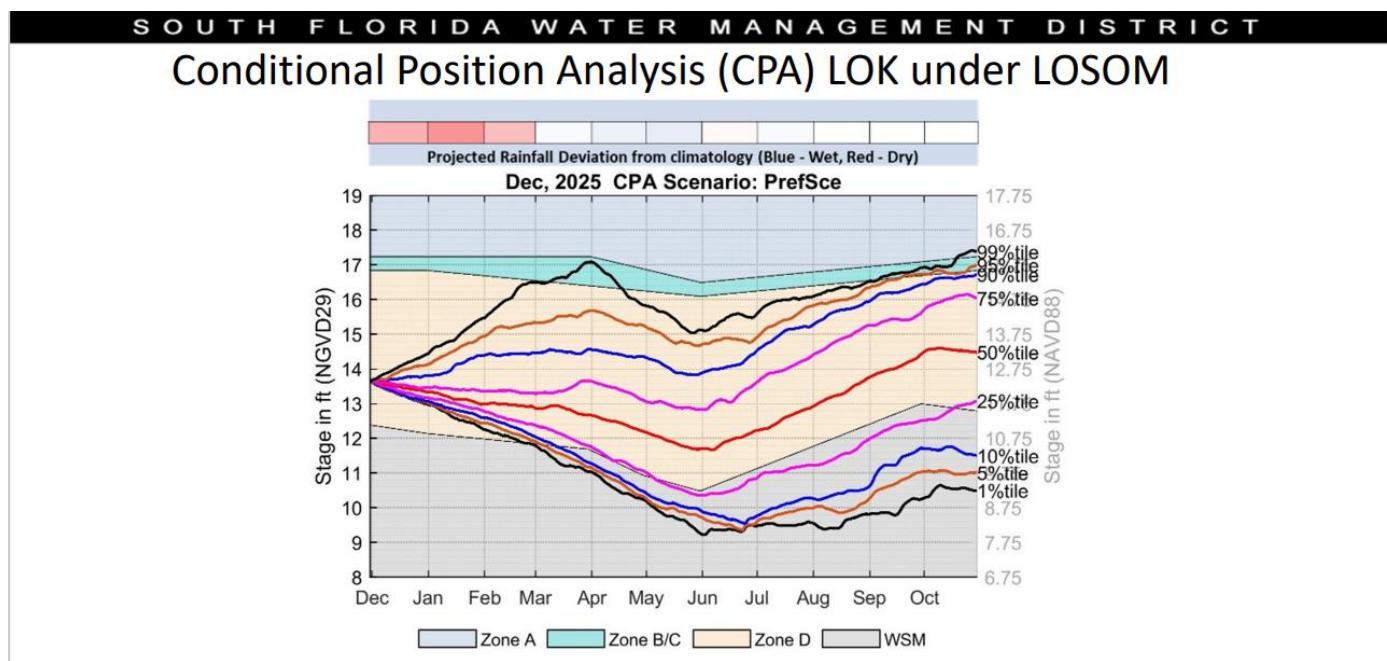
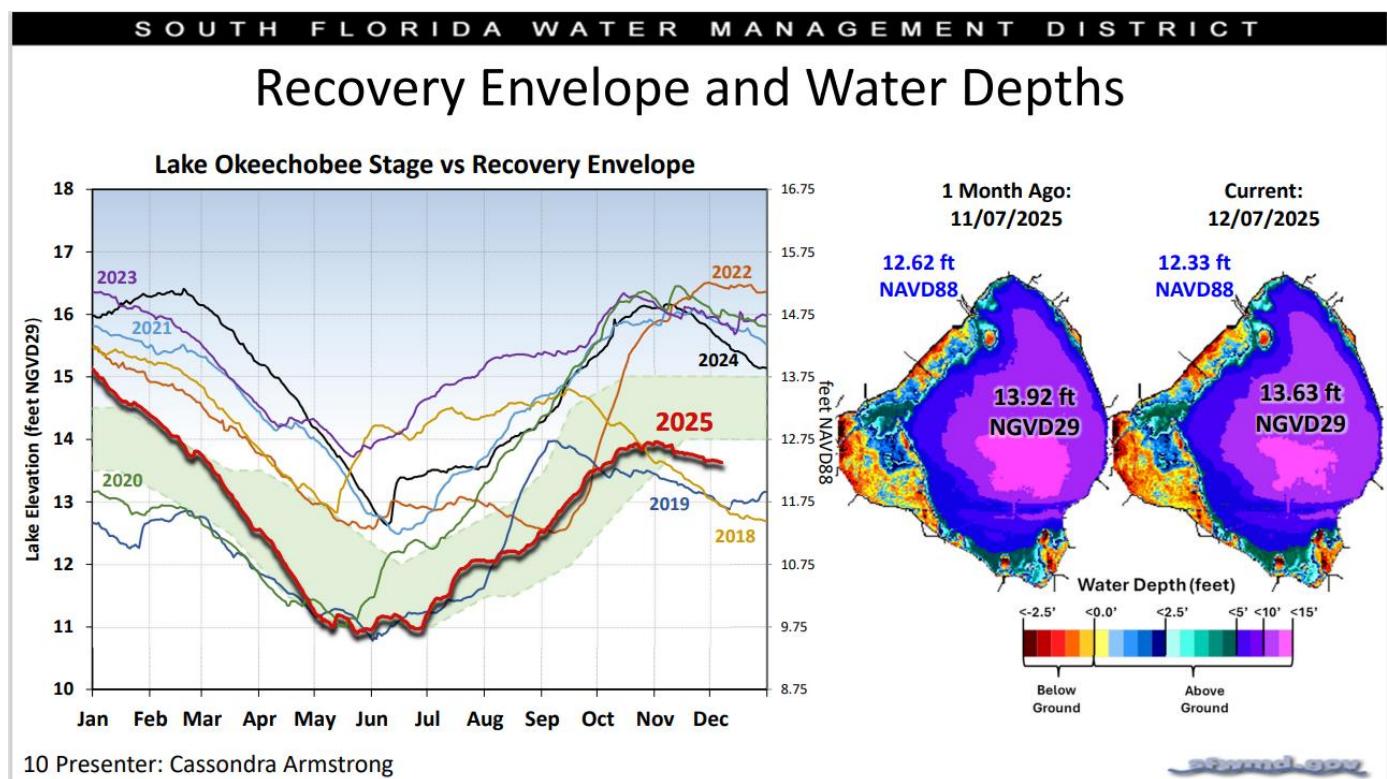
### BACKGROUND:

### CALOOSAHATCHEE RIVER & ESTUARY CONDITIONS REPORT



Click to view: [December 16, 2025 Caloosahatchee Conditions Report](#)

Slides from SFWMD Water and Ecological Conditions Summary, December 11, 2025



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# Caloosahatchee River Estuary MFL

**Minimum Flows and Levels** – the limit at which further withdrawals will cause “significant harm” to the water resources or ecology of an area

**Significant Harm:** temporary loss of water resource functions which result from a change in surface or groundwater hydrology, that takes more than two years to recover, but which is considered less severe than serious harm

## Minimum Flows and Levels (MFL) for CRE:

**30-day moving average flow of 457 cfs at S-79**

- An exceedance occurs during a 365-day period when the 30-day MA flow at S-79 is below 457 cfs
- A violation occurs when an MFL exceedance occurs more than once in a 5-year period

**Flow shall be sufficient to maintain a salinity gradient that prevents significant harm to mobile and immobile indicator species in the CRE**

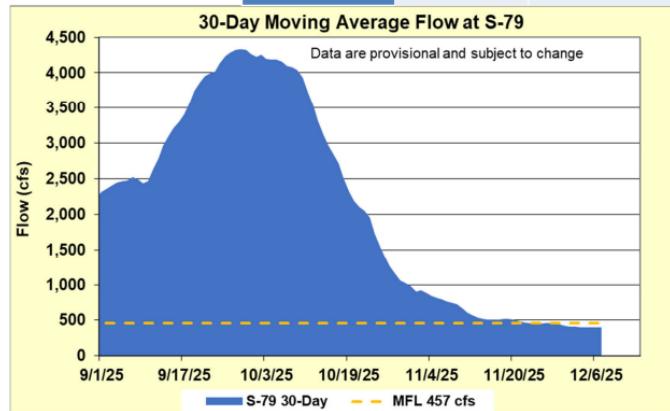


The C-43 reservoir is not currently fully operational, so exceedances and violations are expected to occur

17 Presenter: Cassandra Armstrong

## Seven-Day Average Salinities

Sampling Site	Surface	Bottom
S-79	6.9 (7.4)	7.3 (8.2)
Val I-75	8.7 (8.5)	10.4 (10.6)
Fort Myers	15.5 (13.8)	16.5 (15.9)



## ALGAE BLOOMS

**Red Tide:** FWC Update for December 31, 2025

<https://myfwc.com/research/redtide/statewide/>

Over the past week, the red tide organism, *Karenia brevis*, was observed in 8 samples from Northwest Florida. Bloom concentrations (>100,000 cells/liter) were observed in one sample from Bay County.

**Red tide was not reported in samples from In Southwest Florida over the past week.**

Fish kills & respiratory irritation suspected to be related to red tide were reported in Northwest FL.

**Blue-Green Algae:** [ProtectingFloridaTogether.gov](https://ProtectingFloridaTogether.gov)

Effective Oct. 31, 2025, the DEP weekly blue-green algae report was phased out and transitioned to the water quality dashboard at [ProtectingFloridaTogether.gov](https://ProtectingFloridaTogether.gov). This interactive platform provides real-time statewide data on water quality, blue-green algae and red tide. Anyone interested may sign up for email or text alerts at [ProtectingFloridaTogether.gov](https://ProtectingFloridaTogether.gov) to stay informed about conditions in your area.



There are no current blue-green algae reports for Charlotte Harbor or the Caloosahatchee.

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**Red Drift Algae:** Since early October, periodic deposits of red drift algae have been reported on Sanibel's beaches. Deposits ranged from light to heavy. Beach patrol reports from Officer Royka noted algae deposits on most dates in December. Algae deposits and other beach wrack provide important foraging opportunities for shorebirds and other wildlife (Photo right; circled in blue).

**Trichodesmium:** No reports

**Sargassum:** No reports



## PAST MEETING HIGHLIGHTS & UPDATES

### **C&SF Water Management: Local Engagement and Collaboration - Seasonal Assessment Point - Dry Season**

December 2, 2025

Virtual

As part of the Lake Okeechobee System Operations Manual (LOSOM) implementation and to continue the model of seasonal assessments in the Combined Operations Plan (COP), the Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) system operating agencies hosted a Seasonal Assessment Point on Tuesday, Dec 2, 2025. The Seasonal Assessment Point covered both the northern and southern regions of the C&SF system with the intent to identify the desired outcomes for the 2025/2026 dry season. A part of the workshop focused on a review of the system-wide conditions over the past several seasons (a look back) and climate projections (a look forward). The workshop discussion helps assess operational goals and strategies for the dry season across the south Florida system – which in turn will set the trajectory that can be reviewed at each subsequent monthly meeting for the north and south regions. The Corps is accepting written comments from stakeholders.

### **CHNEP Technical Advisory Committee Meeting**

December 4, 2025

Port Charlotte, FL

<https://www.chnep.org/technical-advisory-committee>

- Loss of Seagrass in Matlacha Pass and the Distribution and Abundance of Macroalgae — Eric Milbrandt, PhD., Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation

### **Harmful Algal Bloom Task Force**

December 9, 2025

St. Petersburg, FL

<https://myfwc.com/research/redtide/taskforce/meeting/>

Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/live/Gf7ZYIzYFB0>

## **SFWMD Governing Board Meeting**

December 11, 2025

West Palm Beach, FL

[https://sfwmd.granicus.com/player/clip/599?view\\_id=6&redirect=true](https://sfwmd.granicus.com/player/clip/599?view_id=6&redirect=true)

- Executive Director's Report
  - Governor DeSantis Proposed Budget
    - \$681 million for CERP, including full funding of EAA Reservoir
    - \$50 million for underground storage north of Lake Okeechobee
    - \$79 million for Northern Everglades & Estuaries Protection Program (NEEP)
    - \$100 million for Lower Kissimmee Basin STA
    - \$100 million for SFWMD operations & maintenance of Everglades restoration projects
  - Strike Team: Plan for low lake levels on Lake Okeechobee
    - Prescribed burning, planting, muck management, water supply
- **Public Comment: Dan Delisi on behalf of Lee County regarding Lake Okeechobee and low flows to the Caloosahatchee, emphasizing that the Caloosahatchee is the only stakeholder currently experiencing harm; minimal increases in flows to the Caloosahatchee won't impact whether or not the region is in water shortage later in the dry season; also noted the year round water restrictions in place in Lee County but not in Palm Beach County (time stamp 32:45)**
  - Plus additional comments in support of increased flow from Friends of the Everglades, Audubon Florida, SCCF, & Florida Oceanographic Institute.
- Adopted the updated 5-Year Strategic Plan of the District for the purpose of establishing Board Guidance, strategic priorities, goals, projects and success indicators.
- Celebration: 25th Anniversary of the Signing of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP)

## **UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS**

### **CHNEP Management Committee Meeting**

January 9, 2026

Port Charlotte, FL

<https://www.chnep.org/technical-advisory-committee>

### **35th Annual Southwest Florida Water Resources Conference**

January 23, 2026

8:00 AM

Fort Myers, FL (FGCU)

<https://awraflorida.org/event-6376119>

### **41<sup>st</sup> Annual Everglades Coalition Conference**

#### **Everglades Strong: All In for Restoration**

January 28-30, 2026

Naples, FL

<https://www.evergladescoalition.org/conference>

**FUNDING SOURCE:** N/A

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** N/A

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