

**SEFLUC  
Regulatory Update  
December 16, 2019**

**Updates**

• **USACE’s Development of New Lake Okeechobee 2022 Regulation Schedule**

- In January 2019, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) announced that a series of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) public scoping meetings would be held throughout February regarding the development of the new Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS), *see* <https://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Media/News-Releases/Article/1742909/corps-invites-public-to-provide-input-on-new-lake-okeechobee-system-operating-m/>. *Meeting dates are on SEFLUC calendar*
- In January 4, 2019 letter, Gov.-Elect DeSantis requested Pres. Trump to direct the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers commence public review of LORS to protect human health and safety, including “mitigating toxic water flows into the population of the Florida public, ensuring the necessary water quantity and quality for the greater Everglades region, and protecting the stability of the Herbert Hoover Dike.”
- On January 29, 2019 Gov. DeSantis announced that he supported reducing the lake level to about 10.5 feet, about 2 feet lower than the current 12.6 feet pre-wet season level currently implemented by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the existing 2008 LORS **Project purposes** - flood control, water supply, recreation, navigation and environmental effects to fish and wildlife, cultural and recreational resources.
- Updated Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM) and accompanying Environmental Impact Statement
- **Announced USACE Schedule:**

<b>Public Scoping/Plan Formulation</b>	Feb. – Sept. 2019
<b>Public Workshops/Alternative Evaluation</b>	Oct. 2019 – Sept. 2021
<b>Prepare Draft LOSOM/EIS</b>	Oct. 2021 – Jan. 2022
<b>Public Comment on LOSOM/EIS</b>	Feb – Mar. 2022
<b>Prepare Final LOSOM/EIS</b>	Apr. – May 2022
<b>Final LOSOM/EIS</b>	June 2022
<b>Signed Record of Decision</b>	September 2022

- **Held Public Scoping Meetings**

- Member utilities comments at public scoping meeting raise concerns about change in regulation schedule:
  - Need to provide safe, reliable water services to 6.5 million customers
  - CERP and WSE are foundation for current water use permits and SFMWD regulations
  - LORS08 was intended as interim measure and WSE regulation schedule was to be restored after dike repairs
  - Even more onerous regulatory schedule may jeopardize meeting permit and rule requirements, dependable water supply
  - Base condition for reevaluation should recognize reliance of existing programs on WSE, 1 in 10 level of protection for public supply
  - Any proposed changes should maintain current levels of public supply availability and reduce water shortage frequency, take into account cutbacks caused by LORS08
  - Lower lake levels could exacerbate salt water intrusion, change in scheduled should maintain necessary hydraulic head
  - Evaluation should incorporate climactic impact variability on regional system
- March 15, 2019 joint letter of concern submitted to USACE and SFMWD regarding current Lake operations
- Update on SEFLUC meeting with USACE on April 4, 2019
- April 22, 2019 SEFLUC submits comment letter regarding LOSOM scope.
- 8,000 LOSOM scope comments submitted to USACE
- June 18, 2019 - Rep. Mast introduced Prioritizing Revised Operations to Eliminate Cyanobacteria Toxins in Florida Act, (PROTECT Florida Act) which would add “public health” as criteria to be considered in Lake operations, including minimization of cyanobacteria and algal blooms
- Recent USACE meetings regarding LOSOM
  - **Project Delivery Team Meetings:** First meeting held on **Aug. 20**. USACE explained that in September it would develop preliminary screening methods, tools, and metrics. Additional meeting held September 26 (web meeting) and October 24 (Dade County).
  - **Public Workshops:** **Sept. 16** at the Cape Vineyard Community Church, 923 SE 47th Terrace, Cape Coral, FL 33904. **Sept. 17** at Indian River State College in Stuart, FL.
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- **US Sugar Lawsuit Against the USACE**
  - On August 1, 2019 U.S. Sugar filed a lawsuit in federal district court in the southern district of Florida. The lawsuit challenges the USACE’s ability to deviate from the LORS 2008 regulation schedule without first complying with NEPA and the Federal Administrative Procedures Act. The lawsuit is based on the USACE’s past deviations in 2019. The lawsuit seeks to enjoin the USACE from taking similar action in the future

- **USACE's Proposed Deviation From LORS 2008**
  - On August 6, 2019 the USACE posted notice on the Jacksonville District's web site of proposed changes to the LORS 2008 regulation schedule. The purpose of the deviation is to allow the USACE to suspend the current regulation schedule when harmful algal blooms (HABs) are present.
  - The proposed deviation would allow the following:
    - When HABs are present, the USACE may make maximum releases of 2,000 cfs and 730 cfs to the Caloosahatchee River and the St. Lucie River at the time the LORS 2008 guidance suggests releases of 450 cfs and 200 cfs.
    - The USACE would have the ability to make maximum practicable releases south to the water conservation areas, when LORS 2008 guidance does not recommend releases.
    - This deviation will modify the current LORS 2008 until it is replaced by a new water control plan called LOSOM in 2022.
  - If the USACE is allowed to implement this deviation, SEFLUC's members along the Lower East Coast would be adversely affected as follows:
    - Lake Okeechobee would be operating more frequently in the Water Shortage Band than is currently the case under LORS 2008, which will impact the availability of surface and groundwater.
    - The existing legal use guaranteed under WRDA 2000 would be significantly reduced.
    - It would establish a precedent of allowing the USACE to operate the Regional System for the purpose of controlling HABs, which is not a Congressionally approved purpose and would elevate that purpose above all other Congressionally approved purposes, including public and agricultural water supply.
    - It would supplant LORS 2008 as the base case for purposes of developing LOSAM.
  - The USACE has posted on its web site an expedited EA and a proposed FONSI authorizing this proposed deviation. The USACE extended the deadline for the public to provide public comment regarding these two documents to September 20, 2019 due to Hurricane Dorian. The use of an EA and FONSI rather than an EIS to establish a regulation schedule for Lake Okeechobee is unprecedented.
  - SEFLUC prepared and submitted a letter objecting to the proposed deviation, explaining the issues with the proposed deviation, and recommending that a full EIS be completed to evaluate the full impact of any proposed deviation. A copy of the letter is attached.
  - Comment letters have been submitted by FDEP, Lake Worth Drainage District, Martin County, SFWMD, Florida Cattleman's Association, Audubon of Florida, the Palm Beach County Economic Council, Florida Inland Navigation District, the Nature Conservancy, Palm Beach County, Florida Crystals, the Lake Okeechobee Anglers, FDACS, Seminole Tribe of Florida, U.S. Sugar and the City of West Palm Beach. Copies are available upon request.

- **Draft USACE RECOVER Lake Okeechobee Stage Envelope Performance Measure**
  - Based on assessment for improving CERP’s ability to restore ecosystem while providing for region’s other water-related needs.
  - Last updated in 2007 including a range of 12.5 to 15.5 feet.
  - Proposes to modify to 12 to 15 feet state target.
  - USACE accepting comment through December 20.
  
- **FDEP Blue-Green Algae Task Force**
  - Established by Executive Order charged with focusing on expediting progress to reduce impact of blue-green algae blooms over the next five years, restoration initiatives in Lake Okeechobee and estuaries, identify priority projects for funding, make recommendations for regulatory changes.
  - Released draft consensus document on October 3, 2019 with recommendations regarding BMAP improvements, enhancing agricultural best management practices, increased oversight of onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems, addressing sanitary sewer overflows, expanded water quality monitoring. Document intended to be high level recommendation to legislature.
  
- **DEP Contaminated Media Forum Meeting**
  - **September 12, 2019 Meeting** –<https://floridadep.gov/waste/district-business-support/content/contaminated-media-forum>
    - The meeting presented developments in the assessment and cleanup of perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), with particular focus on perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS):
      - Provisional cleanup target levels for PFOA and PFOS in soil and groundwater
      - Development of surface water screening levels
      - Division of Waste Management PFOA/PFAS investigation efforts
      - Unregulated Contaminants Monitoring Rule (UCMR)
      - Certified Fire Training Facilities
      - Select Drycleaning and State Cleanup Sites
      - Consideration of PFAS congeners other than PFOA and PFOS
  
- **DEP Biosolids Rulemaking**
  - DEP has initiated rulemaking to address the Biosolids TAC recommended actions
  - Workshops held June 2019 – DEP is accepting comments through August 15, 2019. <https://floridadep.gov/water/domestic-wastewater/content/dep-chapter-62-640-fac-rulemaking-and-biosolids-technical-advisory>
  - Draft rule revisions incorporate TAC recommendations
    - Revised criteria for determining application rates
    - Nutrient Management Plan requirements
    - Monitoring requirements for WEP, soil, groundwater, surface water

- Limits on land application for high water table soils (15 cm depth)
  - Modified septage treatment provisions
- **DEP Triennial Water Quality Review**
  - DEP has initiated triennial review of state surface water quality standards as required by Federal Clean Water Act.
  - DEP kickoff workshop May 14, 2019 provided overview of changes under consideration
    - Ch. 62-4 – no planned changes
    - Ch. 62-302
      - Potential revisions to turbidity criterion for coral protection
      - Potential revision regarding EPA recommended Selenium criteria
      - Potential clarifications of numeric nutrient criteria implementation document
      - Potential revisions to impairment for DO due to natural conditions for SSAC
      - Adoption of maps showing Class II waters (shellfish propagation or harvesting)
    - Ch. 62-303 – Few changes anticipated
    - Ch. 62-304 – Streamlining and updating of TMDLs
  - Four public workshops held between November 4-November 7, 2019
  - Draft Rule Revisions Available on website
  - <https://floridadep.gov/dear/water-quality-standards/content/triennial-review-water-quality-standards>
- **FDEP Evaluation of Human Health-Based Water Quality Criteria**
  - FDEP to collect data on how much and what types of fish and shellfish Floridians eat. The information will be used to determine current long-term fish consumption patterns for adult (18 years of age and older) Floridians, which will be used to revise Florida’s human health-based water quality criteria (HHC) listed in Rule 62-302.530, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.).
  - Comments on report requested by October 31, 2019
  - <https://floridadep.gov/dear/water-quality-standards/content/fish-consumption-survey-project>
- **U.S. EPA New Lead and Copper Rule**
  - EPA published proposed revisions to the Lead and Copper Rule (LCR) on November 13.
    - Significant changes to existing LCR Rule including:
      - Maintains lead action level at 15 ppb but creates trigger level of 10 ppb that trigger additional planning, monitoring, and treatment requirements

- Required actions depend on size of community water system, status of use of Corrosion Control Treatment, and existence of Lead Service Lines (LSL)
- Prioritizes sampling of sites served by LSLs
- All water systems with LSLs required to prepare plan for a LSL replacement program if lead trigger or action level is exceeded, including notification of consumers
- All water systems must conduct targeted sampling and education at schools and child care facilities they serve
- When an individual sample exceeds 15 ppb, water systems are required to “find and fix” the sites, provide information to consumers, evaluate cause of elevated lead level
- Additional reporting requirements to and from primacy agency
- SEFLUC has submitted a request for extension of comment period, and is preparing a comment letter

### Continuing to Monitor/No Update

- **Amendment 1 Funding**
  - Judge Dodson canceled trial brought by environmental groups challenging the State’s use of Amendment 1 money stating he was finding in favor of the plaintiffs and the use of Amendment 1 money by the Legislature did violate the Florida Constitution. Order is still pending and State will appeal.
- **EPA Toxicological Profile for Perfluoroalkyls**
  - Public Comment Closed August 20
  - The Tox Profile is accompanied by a fact sheet that utilities may find helpful in putting drinking water PFAS exposure in context for customers.
  - EPA is expected to release draft toxicity values for perfluoro-2-propoxypropanoic acid (GenX) - a replacement chemical for PFOA, and perfluorobutane sulfonate (PFBS) in August.
- **PFOA/PFAS Standards**
  - Currently, the EPA has a **non-enforceable** health advisory level of 70 parts per trillion for Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) combined.
    - The two compounds are the focus of several activities at EPA, including a national summit in Washington, D.C., in May. **The agency has committed itself to evaluating PFOA and PFAS for regulation in drinking water.**

- **EPA – Office of Inspector General Report**
  - November 15, 2018 – EPA Unable to Assess the Impact of Hundreds of Unregulated Pollutants in Land-Applied Biosolids on Human Health and Environment ([https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-11/documents/\\_epaoig\\_20181115-19-p-0002.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-11/documents/_epaoig_20181115-19-p-0002.pdf))
    - Land Application of biosolids is not adequately regulated to ensure
- **WOTUS**
  - Proposed rule published 2/14/19, accepted comments through 4/15/19.
    - Proposed rule is significantly narrower than 2015 WOTUS Rule, more closely replicates case law with some exceptions
      - Abandons idea of significant nexus test
      - 1<sup>st</sup> category things that are WOTUS
      - 2<sup>nd</sup> category things that are not WOTUS
      - 3<sup>rd</sup> section definitions
        - Includes definition of what constitutes a cooling pond
      - Clarified what is considered prior converted crop land and abandonment.
- **EPA Requests Comments on Conduit Theory**
  - **February 19, 2019** – US Supreme Court agreed to review Maui’s Petition for Review as to whether CWA’s prohibition as to unpermitted discharges covers activities that cause pollutants to be conveyed through groundwater to waters of the United States. Oral arguments have been scheduled for November 6.
  - US EPA 2019 Interpretive Statement concluded that “releases of pollutants to groundwater are categorically excluded from the [CWA’s] permitting requirements because Congress explicitly left regulation of discharges to groundwater to the states and to EPA under other statutory authorities.”
- **Potable Reuse Commission Meeting**
  - **Most Recent Meeting – September 20**
  - Draft Potable Reuse Framework Report
  - <http://prc.watereuseflorida.com/>
- **DEP Central Florida Water Initiative Rulemaking**
  - 373.0465, Fla. Stat. requires DEP to adopt uniform rules for CFWI area, including a single definition of “harmful to the water resources” a single method for calculating per capita water use, a residential per capita goal for each CUP, and an annual conservation goal for each CUP
  - DEP, SFWMD, SJRWMD, SWFWMD, and FDACS held a rulemaking workshop on April 4, 2019 and released updated proposed rule language on the following subjects:
    - Saline Water Intrusion
    - Annual Conservation Goals
    - Public Supply Demands
    - CII and Mining Demands
    - ERP/CUP Consistency

- Central Florida water suppliers submitted comments of concern regarding regulation of saline water intrusion, methods for evaluating conservation goals
- DEP in the process of evaluating comments received