



## FRESHWATER DISCHARGES FROM LAKE OKEECHOBEE & CALOOSAHATCHEE WATERSHED

### SHORT-TERM LOW-COST STRATEGIES FOR WATER STORAGE

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1. Provide adaptive flexibility for water level management in the Upper Kissimmee Chain of Lakes regulation schedules to allow more water storage by holding lake levels higher earlier than November for the benefit of water supply, water quality, and wildlife habitat.
2. Maximize flows through the Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs) and Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) to the full extent possible to convey water south during the wet season to reduce high-flow impacts to the coastal estuaries.
3. Maximize storage on all private lands currently under contract with the SFWMD for the disbursed water management program. Investigate the potential for additional projects based on cost/benefit analysis (e.g., Alico Corporation 75,000 ac in eastern Caloosahatchee basin). Explore additional economic incentives for water storage on private lands within the Caloosahatchee basin.
4. Utilize emergency storage on all public lands within the Kissimmee, Lake Okeechobee, St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee basins. Secure permits and/or authorizations now in preparation for the spring recession in Lake Okeechobee and free up storage capacity for wet season. The C-43 West Reservoir/Berry Groves site is a good example of where there are opportunities for water storage on public lands. These sites should be utilized prior to exceeding the high flow ecological targets in the Caloosahatchee (>2,800 cfs 30-d moving average).
5. Revisit the Lake Okeechobee Release Schedule (LORS 2008) risk assessment to determine if there are any opportunities to provide more freeboard to reduce discharges to the estuaries in light of recent improvements in the Herbert Hoover Dike. Evaluate the Lake Okeechobee Minimum Flow and Level (MFL) to determine if Lake levels can be maintained lower to increase storage capacity without ecological impacts. Reevaluate how flows to the Caloosahatchee are measured under the LORS 2008 schedule (S-77 instead of S-79 in higher bands) to make regulatory releases more equitable.
6. Reassess the Adaptive Protocols for Lake Okeechobee to ensure that the Caloosahatchee receives ecologically beneficial flows to meet established salinity targets during the dry season when other water users are not experiencing water shortage cutbacks and no other ecosystems are being harmed.
7. Settle the Lykes Brothers' Basinger Grove dike/floodplain storage issue with USACE, which is preventing 70% of the Kissimmee River restoration storage and treatment benefits for work already completed.