

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Governing Board Members

**FROM:** Carolina Maran, Ph.D., P.E., and Rich Virgil, P.E., Division of Flood Control and Water Supply Planning

**DATE:** February 12, 2026

**SUBJECT:** Preparations for Water Shortages and Low Lake Okeechobee Levels

**Agenda Item Background:**

The South Florida Water Management District is experiencing a drier-than-normal dry season and low water levels have been observed in some portions of the District.

A water shortage warning was issued by the South Florida Water Management District's Executive Director due to low water levels in the Biscayne Aquifer and its recharge areas in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, the Lower Tamiami Aquifer in Lee and Collier Counties, and the Indian Prairie Basin in Glades and Highlands Counties. Chapter 40E-21.231(3) allows the Governing Board or the Executive Director to issue a water shortage warning calling for voluntary reductions in demand within a source and encouraging water users to undertake water conservation measures, particularly compliance with the District's year-round landscape irrigation conservation measures and any local landscape irrigation ordinances. It is anticipated that drier-than-normal conditions will persist for the remainder of the dry season which started October 11, 2025, and is expected to last until May 2026.

If voluntary water conservation measures fail to prevent further declines in water levels, the Governing Board delegates to the Executive Director the authority to issue an order declaring a water shortage and imposing restrictions. Any order issued pursuant to this delegated authority shall be submitted to the Governing Board for ratification at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

In addition, low Lake Okeechobee levels provide challenges and opportunities for the advancement of environmental enhancement, water supply, and navigational improvement projects for which transfer authority between state programs is authorized. Additionally, staff requests Governing Board authorization to use District's emergency reserves within the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 budget to provide for water supply as a result of dry conditions and authorizes the Executive Director or his designee to amend existing contract terms in furtherance of the above purposes superseding District Policy Sec. 155-9.

**Additional Item Background:**

**Core Mission and Strategic Priorities**

Issuing a water shortage warning and delegating authority to the Executive Director should conditions worsen supports the District's core mission of preventing serious harm to water resources by alerting users of their responsibility to undertake voluntary water conservation efforts due to low water levels. In addition, implementing Lake Okeechobee Low Water Level Enhancement Projects supports the District's core mission of environmental restoration, water supply and navigation.

**Staff Contact and/or Presenter:**

Carolina Maran, [cmaran@sfwmd.gov](mailto:cmaran@sfwmd.gov), 561-682-6868

Rich Virgil, [rvgil@sfwmd.gov](mailto:rvgil@sfwmd.gov), 561-682-6759

**ATTACHMENTS:**

A. Resolution No. 2026-0213

B. Resolution No. 2026-0214