



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Risk Management
Agency

Valdosta
Regional Office

106 S. Patterson St.
Suite 250
Valdosta, GA
31601-5673

May 19, 2009

TO: All Approved Insurance Providers
All Risk Management Agency Offices
All Other Interested Parties

FROM: Michael Moore /s/ *Michael Moore*
Director

SUBJECT: 2009 Valdosta Regional Irrigation Assessment

This Regional Irrigation Assessment is provided in accordance with instructions in the Loss Adjustment Manual (LAM) Standards Handbook (FCIC-25010), Section 6, PAR 40 F. The Regional Office is required to share information about areas within our region suspected of having inadequate water for irrigation.

South Florida:

The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state. To manage water shortages in an organized and efficient manner, the SFWMD has adopted a Plan and a Rule to restrict water use when supplies fall short (Sec. 373.246, Florida Statutes; Ch. 40E-21, Florida Administrative Code).

The SFWMD has established specific water-use restrictions according to the severity of the water shortage – PHASE I, moderate; PHASE II, severe; PHASE III, extreme; and, PHASE IV, critical – each requiring and increasing larger reduction in water use. A recent assessment follows:

May 15, 2009 - West Palm Beach, FL – In an effort to keep the public informed about the dry conditions gripping much of the state, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) is issuing the following latest conditions report.

SFWMD meteorologists report that appreciable rain is beginning to fall over portions of the district, with southwestern through north-central portions of the South Florida region benefiting most. These rains are expected to continue through the weekend, possibly becoming heavy and widespread early next week and potentially signaling the beginning of the 2009 wet season.



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Despite the pending start of the wet season, South Florida remains in the midst of a regional water shortage. The period from November 2008 through April 2009 ranks as the driest six-month period in South Florida history based on records dating back to 1932. Persistent rainfall is needed to begin to make up for a rainfall deficit of more than 11 inches. The latest [U.S. Drought Monitor report](#) shows that most of the region is experiencing extreme drought conditions, just below the driest and highest level of the monitor's intensity scale.

[Groundwater levels](#) throughout much of the region have dropped to within the lowest 10 percent of their historical range, with some monitoring wells reaching all-time lows. The primary regional storage systems — the Water Conservation Areas and Lake Okeechobee — also continue to decline. At 10.63 feet, the lake is nearly 2.8 feet below its historic average for this time of year.

In response to the continued dry conditions, the SFWMD Governing Board on Thursday approved new emergency water shortage orders:

- **Lake Okeechobee Service Area and Southern Indian Prairie Basin:** Imposes Modified Phase III restrictions that require a 45 percent reduction in water use for agriculture, nurseries and golf courses that draw irrigation water from Lake Okeechobee or surface waters hydraulically connected to Lake Okeechobee. The order affects users within portions of Okeechobee, Glades, Palm Beach, Lee, Hendry, Martin and St. Lucie counties.
- **Palm Beach and Broward Counties:** Halts surface water withdrawals by diversion and impoundment permit holders and specified agricultural permit holders from Water Conservation Areas 1 and 2 and regional canals.
- **West Palm Beach:** Provides several water supply relief options for the City of West Palm Beach.

The orders take effect on Monday, May 18.

Insured Commodities

Insurable commodities that could be affected by these conditions include nursery, peppers, rice, sweet corn, and tomatoes.