

Tampa Bay Regional Water Supply and Drought Update

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CLEARWATER, Fla. (April 17, 2013)— Due to below average rainfall since October, exhausted river water flows and current regional water supply conditions, the Tampa Bay region remains in a Phase 4 water shortage status. This regional shortage is considered to be at a Phase 4 status under the agency's modified Water Shortage Mitigation Plan.

Drinking water supplies are currently sufficient to serve the region; however, surface water levels remain critically exhausted. Water levels in the Alafia River and Tampa Bypass Canal remain well below permit threshold limits, meaning that there is no river water available to be captured and used by Tampa Bay Water. The regional surface water system will be offline until the summer rainy season. The Tampa Bay Seawater Desalination Plant is producing 20 million gallons per day and will continue to during the dry season.

The function of the agency's Water Shortage Plan is to identify when changes in water supply conditions and/or rain patterns occur. Regional watering restrictions are set by the Southwest Florida Water Management District and were changed to a Phase 3 shortage on February 26, 2013.

Regional water facts in March 2013:

- Rainfall totals in March averaged about 1.4 inches, which is about 2.43 inches below normal. Heaviest rainfall occurred from northwest to central Hillsborough County with amounts generally between 2.5 and 3.5 inches of rain. Western and central Pasco County received less than 1 inch.
- Hillsborough River flow was 24 percent of the mean monthly flow for March, while the Alafia River flow was 20 percent of normal.
- Much cooler temperatures in March than normal.
- Regional water supply demands averaged about 230 million gallons per day, about the same as February 2013 demand.

Rainfall totals have been below normal since October 2012 and are predicted to continue this trend throughout the remainder of the spring dry season, although rain events in April appear promising. Weather conditions are expected to be dry and warm through the beginning of the rainy season in June. In order to alleviate the current low levels of surface water and to provide flows for treatment, consistent and above normal rainfall is needed throughout the spring dry season, which is not anticipated.

Tampa Bay Water has requested the cities of Tampa, St. Petersburg, New Port Richey and counties of Hillsborough, Pinellas and Pasco reduce water demands and enforce water restrictions.

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