



Memorandum

Memorandum No: 23-149

Date: December 8, 2023

To: Honorable Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Commissioners

From: Greg Chavarria, City Manager *Susan Grant*

Re: Coordination with South Florida Water Management District during Flooding Events

During the April 2023 Flash Flood, rainfall, king tides, high groundwater table and stormwater discharged through the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) regional water management system from the western municipalities contributed to compromising drainage in the City of Fort Lauderdale (City). Since the City's current stormwater management system drains mainly through gravity, elevated water levels in the main waterways slows or prevents drainage from our neighborhoods. City staff brought this issue to the attention of the SFWMD Executive Director, Drew Bartlett, at the Broward Leaders Resilience Roundtable on October 6, 2023. As a result of heightened awareness of the impacts of these discharges to coastal community, SFWMD reduced discharges to the Middle River during the November 14-16, 2023 No Name storm in response to a request from Oakland Park, allowing their gravity systems to drain.

The SFWMD recently released their [2023 Sea Level Rise and Flood Resiliency Plan](#), a comprehensive list of priority resiliency projects with the goal of reducing the risks of flooding, sea level rise, and other climate impacts on water resources and increasing community and ecosystem resiliency in South Florida. The plan proposes to replace gates at the salinity control structures on the City's western border with pump stations. This would allow greater movement of stormwater from the west into City waterways. City staff have provided public comment that downstream communities are being impacted by the elevated water levels caused by these discharges designed to provide flood protection to the upstream communities. Staff has also been providing similar feedback to the Army Corps of Engineers Central & Southern Florida (C&SF) Flood Resiliency Study, requesting performance metrics in their modeling that demonstrate that future C&SF drainage improvements do not cause further challenges for coastal communities directly impacted by sea level rise.

The SFWMD has been doing extensive outreach on resilience including holding quarterly South Florida Resiliency Coordination Forums to promote collaboration between the South Florida Water Management District, local, state, federal and tribal partners on water management initiatives related to resiliency; and engage partners on assessing the impacts of changing climate conditions and water management implications.

At the November 29, 2023 forum, SFMWD staff acknowledged that their water level gauges at their structures do not provide an adequate picture of downstream impacts. As such, they are working with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to install flood gauges to begin to be able to measure and model impacts of discharges on coastal communities. In addition, staff from Oakland Park, Fort Lauderdale and Dania Beach were invited to provide presentations on flooding from the November No Name Storm. This opened up a discussion on a data exchange of flooding thresholds within those coastal communities that SFMWD can consider when they open up their gates and activate their pump stations.

Recent flooding events and participation in the Resiliency Forum have highlighted the need to improve monitoring of water levels downstream of SFWMD structure and coordination of discharges with coastal municipalities to reduce both upstream and downstream flooding in the South Florida region. Staff will continue to support coordination with SFWMD on strategic planning initiatives and during emergency events.

Please contact Dr. Nancy Gassman, Assistant Public Works Director-Sustainability at 954-828-5769 or by email ngassman@fortlauderdale.gov, should you require additional information.

c: Anthony G. Fajardo, Assistant City Manager
Susan Grant, Assistant City Manager
Thomas J. Ansbro, City Attorney
David R. Soloman, City Clerk
Patrick Reilly, City Auditor
Department Directors
CMO Managers

Commission Memo 23-149 Coordination with S FL Water Management District

Final Audit Report

2023-12-08

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