

# Minimum and Guidance Levels for Lake Easy in Polk County, Florida



February 5, 2017

Resource Evaluation Section  
Water Resources Bureau  
**Southwest Florida**  
*Water Management District*



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Cover: 2014 Aerial Imagery of Lake Easy (Southwest Florida Water Management District).

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# Introduction

## Evaluation of Minimum Flows and Levels

This report describes the development of minimum and guidance levels for Lake Easy in Polk County, Florida. These levels were developed based on the evaluation of historic water levels, including water budget models, and the applicable significant change standards, as discussed in detail in this report.

Following Governing Board approval on August 29, 2017, the levels became effective on February 5, 2018.

## Minimum Flows and Levels Program Overview

### *Legal Directives*

Section 373.042, Florida Statutes (F.S.), directs the Department of Environmental Protection or the water management districts to establish minimum flows and levels (MFLs) for lakes, wetlands, rivers and aquifers. Section 373.042(1)(a), F.S., states that "[t]he minimum flow for a given watercourse shall be the limit at which further withdrawals would be significantly harmful to the water resources or ecology of the area." Section 373.042(1)(b), F.S., defines the minimum water level of an aquifer or surface water body as "...the level of groundwater in an aquifer and the level of surface water at which further withdrawals would be significantly harmful to the water resources of the area." MFLs are established and used by the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD or District) for water resource planning, as one of the criteria used for evaluating water use permit applications, and for the design, construction and use of surface water management systems.

Established MFLs are key components of resource protection, recovery and regulatory compliance, as Section 373.0421(2) F.S., requires the development of a recovery or prevention strategy for water bodies "[i]f the existing flow or level in a water body is below, or is projected to fall within 20 years below, the applicable minimum flow or level established pursuant to S. 373.042." Section 373.0421(2)(a), F.S., requires that recovery or prevention strategies be developed to: "(a) [a]chieve recovery to the established minimum flow or level as soon as practicable; or (b) [p]revent the existing flow or level from falling below the established minimum flow or level." Periodic reevaluation and, as necessary, revision of established minimum flows and levels are required by Section 373.0421(3), F.S.

Minimum flows and levels are to be established based upon the best information available, and when appropriate, may be calculated to reflect seasonal variations (Section 373.042(1), F.S.). Also, establishment of MFLs is to involve consideration of, and at the governing board or department's discretion, may provide for the protection of nonconsumptive uses (Section 373.042(1), F.S.). Consideration must also be given to "...changes and structural alterations to watersheds, surface waters and aquifers, and the effects such changes or alterations have had, and the constraints such changes or

alterations have placed, on the hydrology of the affected watershed, surface water, or aquifer...", with the requirement that these considerations shall not allow significant harm caused by withdrawals (Section 373.0421(1)(a), F.S.). Sections 373.042 and 373.0421 provide additional information regarding the prioritization and scheduling of minimum flows and levels, the independent scientific review of scientific or technical data, methodologies, models and scientific and technical assumptions employed in each model used to establish a minimum flow or level, and exclusions that may be considered when identifying the need for MFLs establishment.

The Florida Water Resource Implementation Rule, specifically Rule 62-40.473, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), provides additional guidance for the establishment of MFLs, requiring that "...consideration shall be given to natural seasonal fluctuations in water flows or levels, nonconsumptive uses, and environmental values associated with coastal, estuarine, riverine, spring, aquatic and wetlands ecology, including: a) Recreation in and on the water; b) Fish and wildlife habitats and the passage of fish; c) estuarine resources; d) Transfer of detrital material; e) Maintenance of freshwater storage and supply; f) Aesthetic and scenic attributes; g) Filtration and absorption of nutrients and other pollutants; h) Sediment loads; i) Water quality; and j) Navigation."

Rule 62-40.473, F.A.C., also indicates that "[m]inimum flows and levels should be expressed as multiple flows or levels defining a minimum hydrologic regime, to the extent practical and necessary to establish the limit beyond which further withdrawals would be significantly harmful to the water resources or the ecology of the area as provided in Section 373.042(1), F.S." It further notes that, "...a minimum flow or level need not be expressed as multiple flows or levels if other resource protection tools, such as reservations implemented to protect fish and wildlife or public health and safety, that provide equivalent or greater protection of the hydrologic regime of the water body, are developed and adopted in coordination with the minimum flow or level." The rule also includes provision addressing: protection of MFLs during the construction and operation of water resource projects; the issuance of permits pursuant to Section 373.086 and Parts II and IV of Chapter 373, F.S.; water shortage declarations; development of recovery or prevention strategies, development and updates to a minimum flow and level priority list and schedule, and peer review for MFLs establishment.

## **Development of Minimum Lake Levels in the Southwest Florida Water Management District**

### ***Programmatic Description and Major Assumptions***

Since the enactment of the Florida Water Resources Act of 1972 (Chapter 373, F.S.), in which the legislative directive to establish MFLs originated, and following subsequent modifications to this directive and adoption of relevant requirements in the Water Resource Implementation Rule, the District has actively pursued the adoption, i.e., establishment of MFLs for priority water bodies. The District implements established MFLs primarily through its water supply planning, water use permitting and environmental resource permitting programs, and through the funding of water resource and water supply development projects that are part of a recovery or prevention strategy. The District's MFLs program addresses all relevant requirements expressed in the Florida Water Resources Act and the Water Resource Implementation Rule.

A substantial portion of the District's organizational resources has been dedicated to its MFLs Program, which logistically addresses six major tasks: 1) development and reassessment of methods for establishing MFLs; 2) adoption of MFLs for priority water bodies (including the prioritization of water bodies and facilitation of public and independent scientific review of proposed MFLs and methods used for their development); 3) monitoring and MFLs status assessments, i.e., compliance evaluations; 4) development and implementation of recovery strategies; 5) MFLs compliance reporting; and 6) ongoing support for minimum flow and level regulatory concerns and prevention strategies. Many of these tasks are discussed or addressed in this Minimum Levels report; additional information on all tasks associated with the District's MFLs Program is summarized by Hancock *et al.* (2010).

The District's MFLs Program is implemented based on three fundamental assumptions. First, it is assumed that many water resource values and associated features are dependent upon and affected by long-term hydrology and/or changes in long-term hydrology. Second, it is assumed that relationships between some of these variables can be quantified and used to develop significant harm thresholds or criteria that are useful for establishing MFLs. Third, the approach assumes that alternative hydrologic regimes may exist that differ from non-withdrawal impacted conditions but are sufficient to protect water resources and the ecology of these resources from significant harm.

Support for these assumptions is provided by a large body of published scientific work addressing relationships between hydrology, ecology and human-use values associated with water resources (e.g., see reviews and syntheses by Postel and Richter 2003, Wantzen *et al.* 2008, Poff *et al.* 2010, Poff and Zimmerman 2010). This information has been used by the District and other water management districts within the state to identify significant harm thresholds or criteria supporting development of MFLs for hundreds of water bodies, as summarized in the numerous publications associated with these efforts (e.g., SFWMD 2000, 2006, Flannery *et al.* 2002, SRWMD 2004, 2005, Neubauer *et al.* 2008, Mace 2009).

With regard to the assumption associated with alternative hydrologic regimes, consider a historic condition for an unaltered river or lake system with no local groundwater or surface water withdrawal impacts. A new hydrologic regime for the system would be associated with each increase in water use, from small withdrawals that have no measurable effect on the historic regime to large withdrawals that could substantially alter the regime. A threshold hydrologic regime may exist that is lower or less than the historic regime, but which protects the water resources and ecology of the system from significant harm. This threshold regime could conceptually allow for water withdrawals, while protecting the water resources and ecology of the area. Thus, MFLs may represent minimum acceptable rather than historic or potentially optimal hydrologic conditions.

### ***Consideration of Changes and Structural Alterations and Environmental Values***

When establishing MFLs, the District considers "...changes and structural alterations to watersheds, surface waters and aquifers, and the effects such changes or alterations have had, and the constraints such changes or alterations have placed, on the hydrology of the affected watershed, surface water, or aquifer..." in accordance with Section 373.0421(1)(a), F.S. Also, as required by statute, the District does not establish MFLs that would allow significant harm caused by withdrawals when considering the changes, alterations and their associated effects and constraints. These considerations are based on review and analysis of best available information, such as water level records, environmental and construction permit information, water control structure and drainage alteration histories, and observation of current site conditions.

When establishing, reviewing or implementing MFLs, considerations of changes and structural alterations may be used to:

- adjust measured flow or water level historical records to account for existing changes/alterations;
- model or simulate flow or water level records that reflect long-term conditions that would be expected based on existing changes/alterations and in the absence of measurable withdrawal impacts;
- develop or identify significant harm standards, thresholds and other criteria;
- aid in the characterization or classification of lake types or classes based on the changes/alterations;
- evaluate the status of water bodies with proposed or established MFLs (i.e., determine whether the flow and/or water level are below, or are projected to fall below the applicable minimum flow or level); and
- support development of lake guidance levels (described in the following paragraph).

The District has developed specific methodologies for establishing minimum flows or levels for lakes, wetlands, rivers, estuaries and aquifers, subjected the methodologies to independent, scientific peer-review, and incorporated the methods for some system types, including lakes, into its Water Level and Rates of Flow Rule (Chapter 40D-8, F.A.C.). The rule also provides for the establishment of Guidance Levels for lakes, which serve as advisory information for the District, lakeshore residents and local governments, or to aid in the management or control of adjustable water level structures.

Information regarding the development of adopted methods for establishing minimum and guidance lake levels is included in Southwest Florida Water Management District (1999a, b) and Leeper *et al.* (2001). Additional information relevant to developing lake levels is presented by Schultz *et al.* (2004), Carr and Rochow (2004), Caffrey *et al.* (2006, 2007), Carr *et al.* (2006), Hancock (2006), Hoyer *et al.* (2006), Leeper (2006), Hancock (2006, 2007) and Emery *et al.* (2009). Independent scientific peer-review findings regarding the lake level methods are summarized by Bedient *et al.* (1999), Dierberg and Wagner (2001) and Wagner and Dierberg (2006).

For lakes, methods have been developed for establishing Minimum Levels for systems with fringing cypress-dominated wetlands greater than 0.5 acre in size, and for those without fringing cypress wetlands. Lakes with fringing cypress wetlands where water levels currently rise to an elevation expected to fully maintain the integrity of the wetlands are classified as Category 1 Lakes. Lakes with fringing cypress wetlands that have been structurally altered such that lake water levels do not rise to levels expected to fully maintain the integrity of the wetlands are classified as Category 2 Lakes. Lakes with less than 0.5 acre of fringing cypress wetlands are classified as Category 3 Lakes.

Categorical significant change standards and other available information are developed to identify criteria that are sensitive to long-term changes in hydrology and can be used for establishing minimum levels. For all lake categories, the most sensitive, appropriate criterion or criteria are used to develop minimum levels. For Category 1 or 2 Lakes, a significant change standard, referred to as the Cypress Standard, is developed. The Cypress Standard is 1.8 feet below the normal pool elevation. For Category 3 lakes, six significant change standards are typically developed. Other available information, including potential changes in the coverage of herbaceous wetland and submersed aquatic plants is also considered when establishing minimum levels for Category 3 Lakes. The standards and other available information are associated with the environmental values identified for consideration in Rule 62-40.473, F.A.C., when establishing MFLs (Table 1). The specific standards and other information evaluated to support development of minimum levels for Lake Easy are provided in subsequent sections of this report. More general information on the standards and other information used for consideration when developing minimum lake levels is available in the documents identified in the preceding sub-section of this report.

**Table 1: Environmental values identified in the state Water Resource Implementation Rule for consideration when establishing minimum flows and levels and associated significant change standards and other information used by the District for consideration of the environmental values.**

<b>Environmental Value</b>	<b>Associated Significant Change Standards and Other Information for Consideration</b>
Recreation in and on the water	Basin Connectivity Standard, Recreation/Ski Standard, Aesthetics Standard, Species Richness Standard, Dock-Use Standard, Herbaceous Wetland Information, Submersed Aquatic Macrophyte Information
Fish and wildlife habitats and the passage of fish	Cypress Standard, Wetland Offset, Basin Connectivity Standard, Species Richness Standard, Herbaceous Wetland Information, Submersed Aquatic Macrophyte Information
Estuarine resources	NA <sup>1</sup>
Transfer of detrital material	Cypress Standard, Wetland Offset, Basin Connectivity Standard, Lake Mixing Standard, Herbaceous Wetland Information, Submersed Aquatic Macrophyte Information
Maintenance of freshwater storage and supply	NA <sup>2</sup>
Aesthetic and scenic attributes	Cypress Standard, Dock-Use Standard, Wetland Offset, Aesthetics Standard, Species Richness Standard, Herbaceous Wetland Information, Submersed Aquatic Macrophyte Information
Filtration and absorption of nutrients and other pollutants	Cypress Standard Wetland Offset Lake Mixing Standard Herbaceous Wetland Information Submersed Aquatic Macrophyte Information
Sediment loads	NA <sup>1</sup>
Water quality	Cypress Standard, Wetland Offset, Lake Mixing Standard, Dock-Use Standard, Herbaceous Wetland Information, Submersed Aquatic Macrophyte Information
Navigation	Basin Connectivity Standard, Submersed Aquatic Macrophyte Information

NA<sup>1</sup> = Not applicable for consideration for most priority lakes;

NA<sup>2</sup> = Environmental value is addressed generally by development of minimum levels based on appropriate significant change standards and other information and use of minimum levels in District permitting programs

## ***Lake Classification***

Lakes are classified as Category 1, 2, or 3 for Minimum Levels development. According to Rule 40D-8.624, F.A.C., Lake Easy meets the classification as a Category 3 lake, with less than 0.5 acre of fringing cypress wetlands. The standards associated with Category 3 lakes described below will also be developed in a subsequent section of this report.

Lake-specific significant change standards and other available information are developed for establishing Minimum Levels for Category 3 Lakes. The standards are used to identify thresholds for preventing significant harm to cultural and natural system values associated with lakes in accordance with guidance provided in the Florida Water Resources Implementation Rule (62-40.473, F.A.C.). Other information taken into consideration includes potential changes in the coverage of herbaceous wetland vegetation and aquatic plants.

The Recreation/Ski Standard is developed to identify the lowest elevation within the lake basin that will contain an area suitable for safe water skiing. The standard is based on the lowest elevation (the Ski Elevation) within the basin that can contain a 5-foot deep ski corridor delineated as a circular area with a radius of 418 feet, or a rectangular ski corridor 200 feet in width and 2,000 feet in length, and use of Historic lake stage data or region-specific Reference Lake Water Regime statistics where Historic lake data are not available.

The Dock-Use Standard is developed to provide for sufficient water depth at the end of existing docks to permit mooring of boats and prevent adverse impacts to bottom-dwelling plants and animals caused by boat operation. The standard is based on the elevation of lake sediments at the end of existing docks, a two-foot water depth for boat mooring, and use of Historic lake stage data or region-specific Reference Lake Water Regime statistics.

The Wetland Offset Elevation is developed to protect lake fringing non-cypress wetlands. Based on the rationale used to develop the Cypress Wetland Standard for Category 1 and 2 lakes (1.8 feet below the Normal Pool elevation), a Wetland Offset Elevation for Category 3 Lakes was developed. Because Hydrologic Indicators of sustained inundation used to determine the Normal Pool elevation usually do not exist on Category 3 Lakes, another datum, in this case the Historic P50 elevation, was used in the development of the Wetland Offset Elevation. Based on an evaluation of the relationship of the Cypress Wetland Standard with the Historic P50 for hydrologically unimpacted cypress wetlands, the Wetland Offset Elevation for Category 3 Lakes was established at an elevation 0.8 feet below the Historic P50 elevation (Hancock, draft report, 2007).

The Aesthetics Standard is developed to protect aesthetic values associated with the inundation of lake basins. The standard is intended to protect aesthetic values associated with the median lake stage from diminishing beyond the values associated

with the lake when it is staged at the Low Guidance Level. The Aesthetics Standard is established at the Low Guidance Level.

The Species Richness Standard is developed to prevent a decline in the number of bird species that may be expected to occur at or utilize a lake. Based on an empirical relationship between lake surface area and the number of birds expected to occur at a lake, the standard is established at the lowest elevation associated with less than a fifteen percent reduction in lake surface area relative to the lake area at the Historic P50 elevation.

The Basin Connectivity Standard is developed to protect surface water connections between lake basins or among sub-basins within lake basins to allow for movement of aquatic biota, such as fish, and support recreational use of the lake. The standard is based on the elevation of lake sediments at a critical high spot between lake basins or lake sub-basins, identification of water depths sufficient for movement of biota and/or watercraft across the critical high spot, and use of Historic lake stage data or the region-specific Reference Lake Water Regime statistics where Historic lake data are not available.

The Lake Mixing Standard is developed to prevent significant changes in patterns of wind-driven mixing of the lake water column and sediment re-suspension. The standard is established at the highest elevation at or below the Historic P50 elevation where the dynamic ratio (see Bachmann *et al.* 2000) shifts from a value of  $<0.8$  to a value  $>0.8$ , or from a value  $>0.8$  to a value of  $<0.8$ .

Herbaceous Wetland Information is also taken into consideration to determine the elevation at which changes in lake stage would result in substantial changes in potential wetland area within the lake basin (i.e., basin area with a water depth of four feet or less) (Butts *et al.* 1997). Similarly, changes in lake stage associated with changes in lake area available for colonization by rooted submersed or floating-leaved macrophytes are also evaluated, based on water transparency values. Using methods described in Caffrey (2006), mean secchi disk depth (SD) is used to calculate the maximum depth of colonization (MDC) for aquatic plants using regression equation  $\log(\text{MDC}) - 0.66\log(\text{SD}) + 0.30$ , where all values are represented in meters. The MDC depth is then used to calculate the total acreage at each lake stage that is available for aquatic plant colonization.

### ***Minimum and Guidance Levels***

Two Minimum Levels and two Guidance Levels are typically established for lakes. Upon completion of a public input/review process and, if necessary completion of an independent scientific review, either of which may result in modification of the proposed levels, the levels are then adopted by the District Governing Board into Chapter 40D-8, F.A.C. (see Hancock *et al.* 2010 for more information on the adoption process). The levels, which are expressed as elevations in feet above the National Geodetic Vertical Datum of 1929 (NGVD29), include the following (refer to Rule 40D-8.624, F.A.C.):

- A **High Guidance Level** that is provided as an advisory guideline for construction of lake shore development, water dependent structures, and operation of water management structures. The High Guidance Level is the elevation that a lake's water levels are expected to equal or exceed ten percent of the time on a long-term basis.
- A **High Minimum Lake Level** that is the elevation that a lake's water levels are required to equal or exceed ten percent of the time on a long-term basis.
- A **Minimum Lake Level** that is the elevation that the lake's water levels are required to equal or exceed fifty percent of the time on a long-term basis.
- A **Low Guidance Level** that is provided as an advisory guideline for water dependent structures, information for lakeshore residents and operation of water management structures. The Low Guidance Level is the elevation that a lake's water levels are expected to equal or exceed ninety percent of the time on a long-term basis.

The District is in the process of converting from use of the NGVD29 datum to use of the North American Vertical Datum of 1988 (NAVD 88). While the NGVD29 datum is used for most elevation values included within this report, in some circumstances, notations are made for elevation data that was collected or reported relative to mean sea level or relative to NAVD88 and converted to elevations relative to NGVD29. Datum conversions were derived using District survey data and the Corpscon 6.0 software distributed by the United States Army Corps of Engineers.

# Development of Minimum and Guidance Levels for Lake Easy

## Lake Setting and Description

Lake Easy (Figure 1) is located in Polk County, Florida (Section 24, Township 30, Range 27; Section 19, Township 30, Range 28) in the Kissimmee River Basin within the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

Within the Kissimmee River primary basin, the lake's watershed (Figure 2) has a drainage area of approximately 1.9 square miles. The lake has one main inlet along the northeast shore, which previously delivered water from Lake Amoret during very high water events, however there is no evidence that there has been flow between the lakes since at least the 1990's (Figure 3). Lake Easy does not have any outlets (Figure 3). There are currently no surface water withdrawals from the lake permitted by the District. There are, however, several permitted groundwater withdrawals in the lake vicinity.

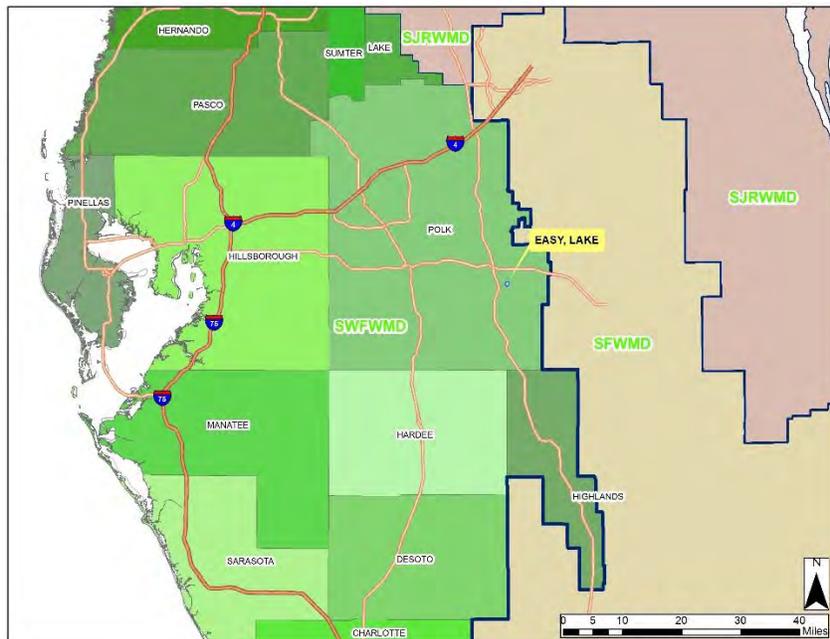


Figure 1: Location of Lake Easy in Polk County, Florida.

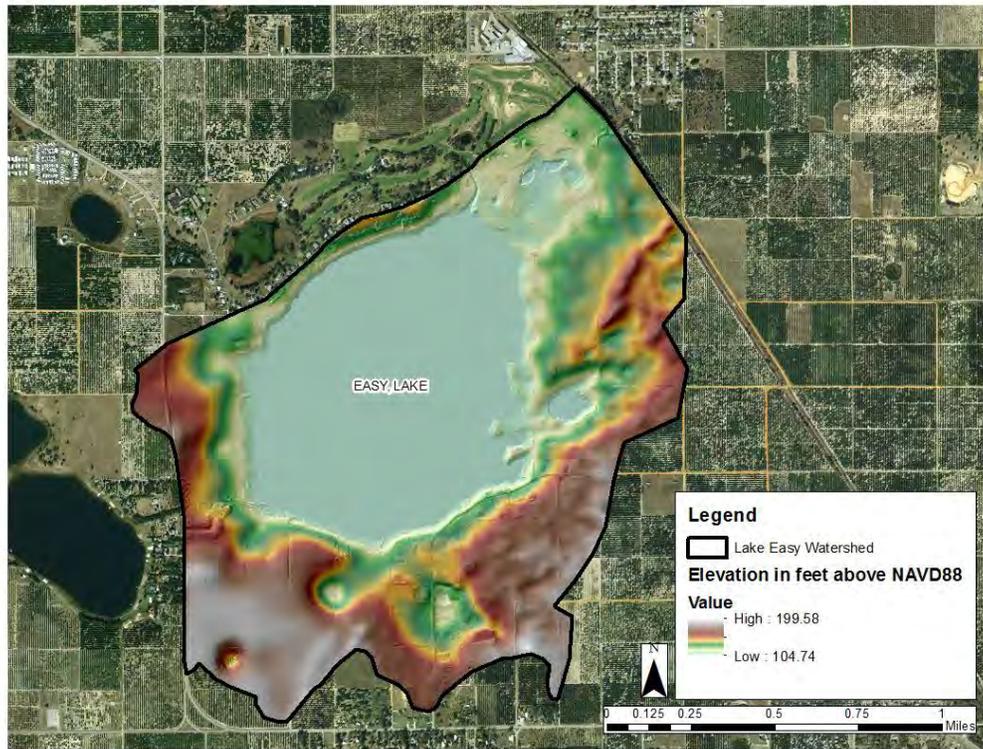


Figure 2: Watershed Delineation and Topography.



Figure 3: Location of Conveyance Systems and District Gages.

### ***Land Use Land Cover***

An examination of the 1990 and more current 2011 Florida Land Use, Cover, and Forms Classification System (FLUCCS) maps revealed that there has been some change to the landscape (specifically the dominant land forms) in the vicinity during this period (Figure 4 and Figure 5). In 1990 (Figure 4) the majority of the land surrounding Lake Easy was classified as either cropland, tree crops, or other open lands. There was some low density residential land, mostly along the northern shore, and recreation land as well. By 2011 (Figure 5), much of the tree crop land to the south of the lake had been replaced with residential lands, and the low density residential lands north of the lake were further developed and classified as medium density. The recreation land was further classified as a golf course, but the remainder of the surrounding landscape remained classified as tree crops or open land similarly to 2011. Figure 6 through Figure 11 aerial photography chronicles landscape changes to the immediate lake basin from 1952 through 2014.

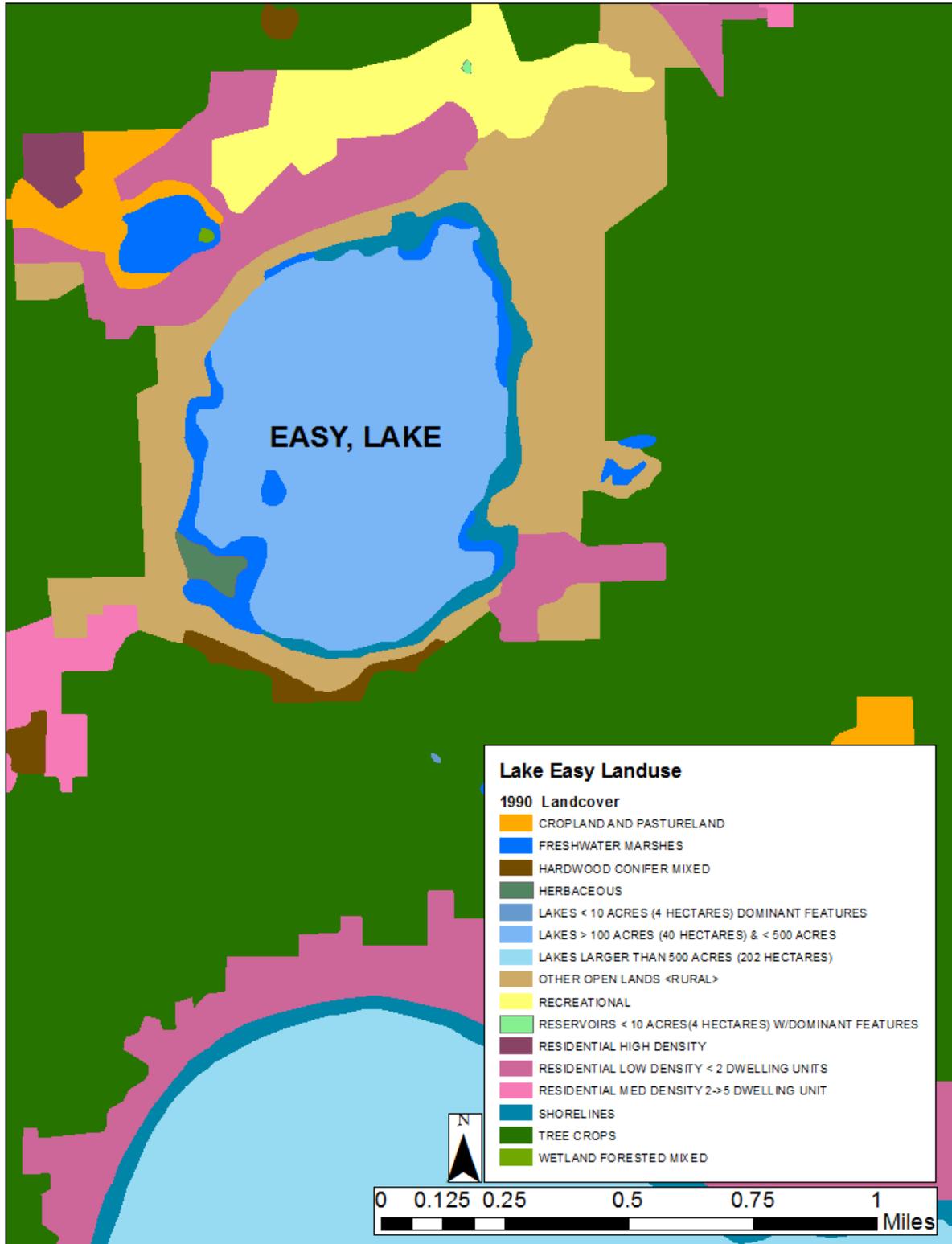
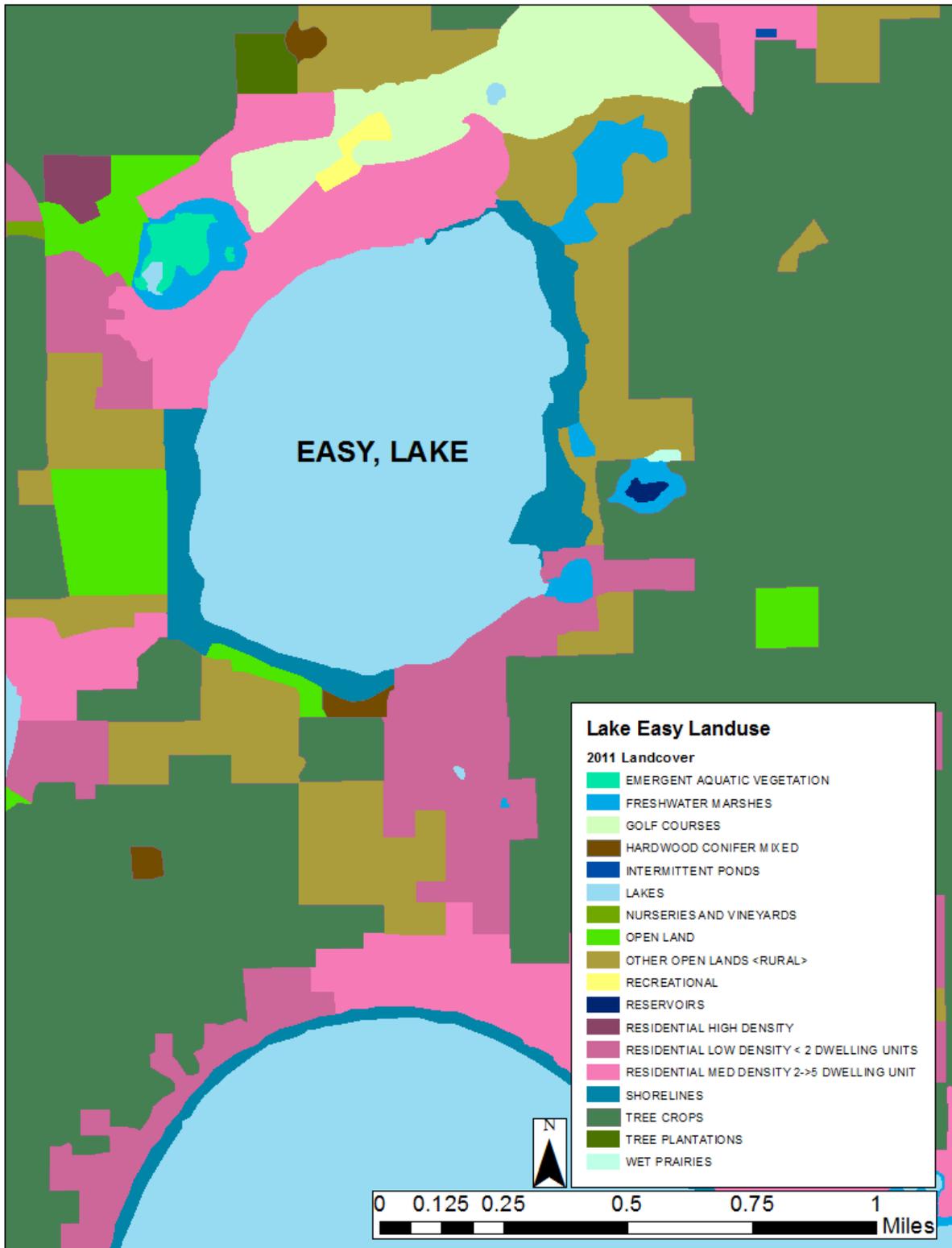


Figure 4: 1990 Land Use Land Cover Map of the Lake Easy Vicinity.



**Figure 5: 2011 Land Use Land Cover Map of the Lake Easy Vicinity.**



**Figure 6: 1952 Aerial Photograph of Lake Easy**



**Figure 7: 1968 Aerial Photograph of Lake Easy**



**Figure 8: 1984 Aerial Photograph of Lake Easy**



**Figure 9: 2006 Aerial Photograph of Lake Easy**



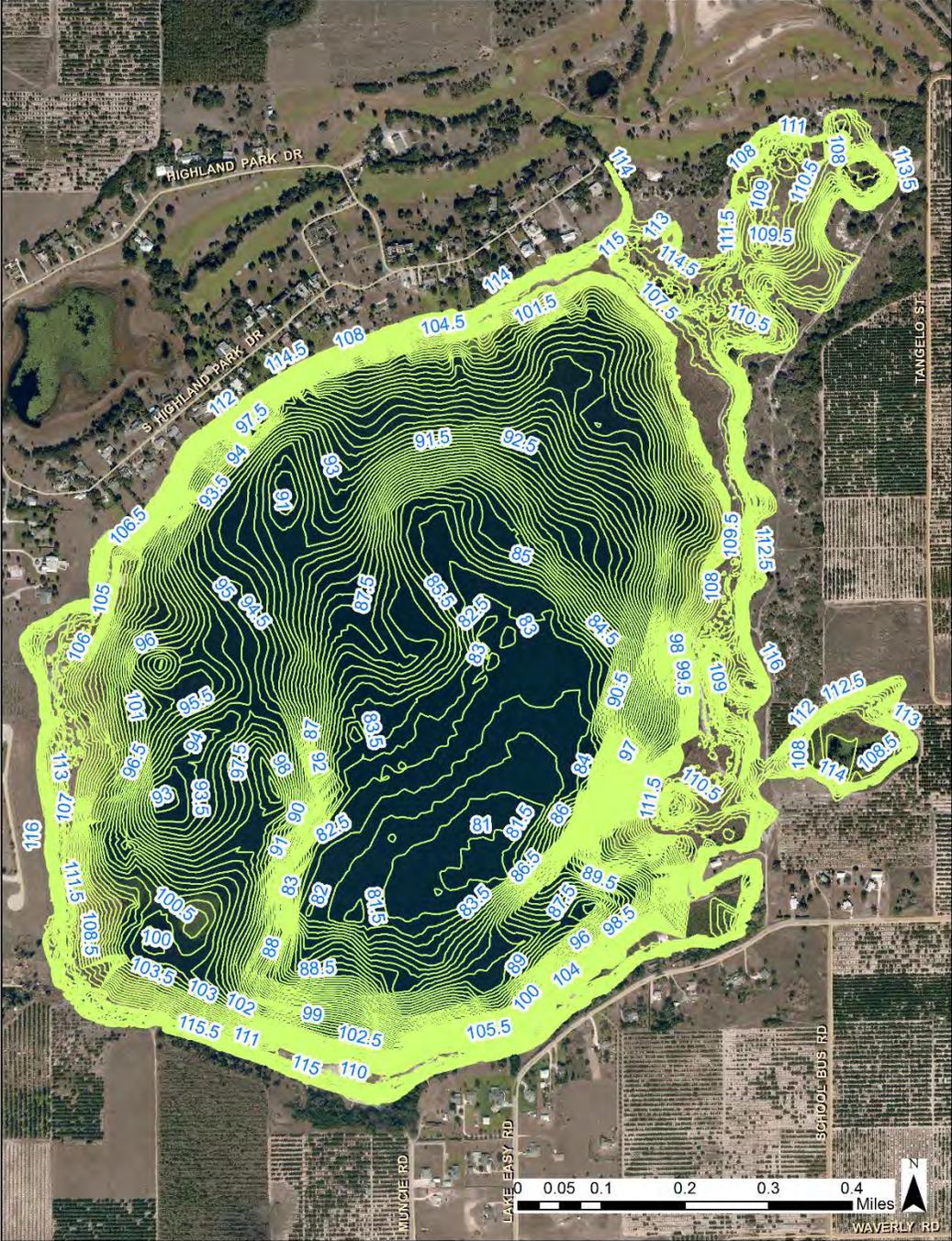
Figure 10: 2011 Aerial Photograph of Lake Easy



Figure 11: 2014 Aerial Photograph of Lake Easy

**Bathymetry Description and History**

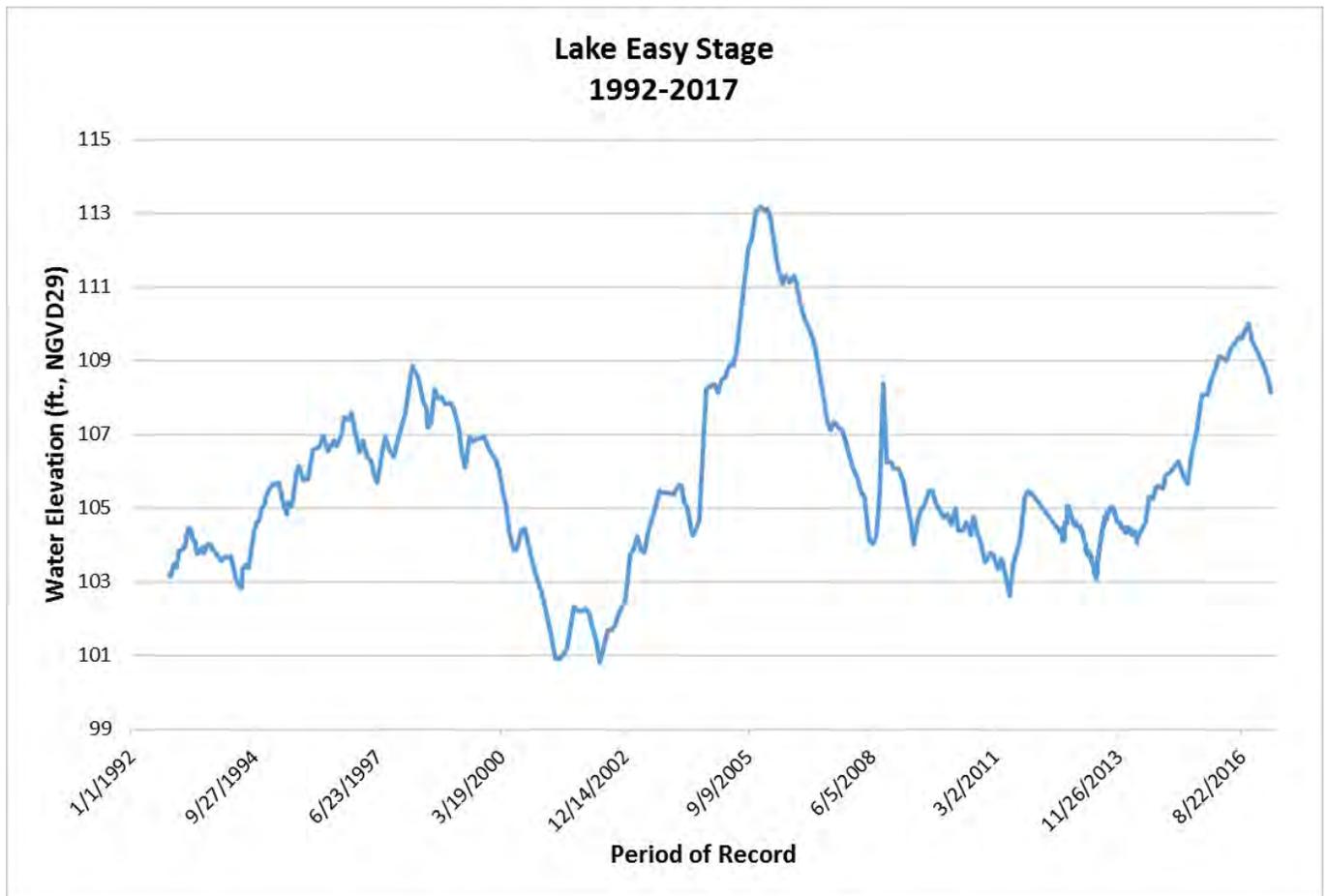
Half-foot interval bathymetric data resulted in lake-bottom contour lines from 81 ft. to 116 ft. (Figure 12). These data revealed that the lowest lake bottom contour (81 ft.) is located in the southeast quarter of the lake. Additional morphometric or bathymetric information for the lake basin is discussed in the Methods, Results and Discussion section of this report.



**Figure 12: Lake Bottom Contours (ft., NGVD29) on a 2014 Natural Color Aerial Photograph**

### **Water Level (Lake Stage) Record**

Lake stage data, i.e., surface water elevations, are available for Lake Easy from the District's Water Management Information System (SID 23879 & 793583) (Figure 13). Data collection began on October 28, 1992 from SID 23879. There was a brief lapse in data collection between January and August 2012, but monitoring began again from SID 793583 on August 8, 2012. Water elevations continue to be monitored on a monthly basis from SID 793583 at the time of this report. The highest lake stage elevation on record was 113.19 ft. and occurred on December 12, 2005. The lowest lake stage elevation on record was 100.8 ft. and occurred on May 23, 2002.



**Figure 13: Lake Easy Period of Record Water Elevation Data (SID 23879 & 793583)**

### ***Historic Management Levels***

The District has a long history of water resource protection through the establishment of lake management levels. With the development of the Lake Levels Program in the mid-1970s, the District began establishing management levels based on hydrologic, biological, physical, and cultural aspects of lake ecosystems. By 1996, management levels for nearly 400 lakes had been adopted into District rules.

There are no previously adopted Minimum and Guidance levels for Lake Easy. Lake Easy does have Guidance Water Levels that were adopted prior to August 7, 2000 which include a High Level of 115.25', Low Level of 113.00', and Extreme Low Level of 111.00', all in feet above Mean Sea Level (msl).

## Methods, Results and Discussion

The Minimum and Guidance Levels in this report were developed for Lake Easy using the methodology for Category 3 lakes described in Chapter 40D-8, F.A.C. Levels, Standards, and other information used for development of the levels, are listed in Table 2, along with lake surface area for each level. Detailed descriptions of the development and use of these data are provided in subsequent sections of this report.

**Table 2: Lake Stage Percentiles, Normal Pool and Control Point Elevations, Significant Change Standards, and Minimum and Guidance Levels with associated surface areas for Lake Easy.**

<b>Levels</b>	<b>Elevation in Feet NGVD 29</b>	<b>Lake Area (acres)</b>
Lake Stage Percentiles		
Historic P10 (1946 to 2013)	110.6	420
Historic P50 (1946 to 2013)	107.3	362
Historic P90 (1946 to 2013)	105.4	348
Normal Pool and Control Point		
Normal Pool	NA	NA
Control Point	NA	NA
Significant Change Standards		
Recreation/Ski Standard	89.4	129
Dock-Use Standard	109.8	409
Wetland Offset Elevation	106.5	356
Aesthetics Standard	105.4	348
Species Richness Standard	101.0	308
Basin Connectivity Standard	NA	NA
Lake Mixing Standard	85.6	87
Minimum and Guidance Levels		
High Guidance Level	110.6	420
High Minimum Lake Level	109.8	409
Minimum Lake Level	106.5	356
Low Guidance Level	105.4	348

NA - not appropriate

## ***Bathymetry***

Relationships between lake stage, inundated area, and volume can be used to evaluate expected fluctuations in lake size that may occur in response to climate, other natural factors, and anthropogenic impacts such as structural alterations or water withdrawals. Long term reductions in lake stage and size can be detrimental to many of the environmental values identified in the Water Resource Implementation Rule for consideration when establishing MFLs. Stage-area-volume relationships are therefore useful for developing significant change standards and other information identified in District rules for consideration when developing minimum lake levels. The information is also needed for the development of lake water budget models that estimate the lake's response to rainfall and runoff, outfall or discharge, evaporation, leakage, and groundwater withdrawals.

Stage-area-volume relationships were determined for Lake Easy by building and processing a digital elevation model (DEM) of the lake basin and surrounding watershed. Elevations of the lake bottom and land surface elevations were used to build the model through a series of analyses using LP360 (by QCoherent) for ArcGIS, ESRI® ArcMap 10.2 software, the 3D Analyst ArcMap Extension, Python, and XTools Pro. The overall process involves merging the terrain morphology of the lake drainage basin with the lake basin morphology to develop one continuous 3D digital elevation model. The 3D digital elevation model is then used to calculate area of the lake and the associated volume of the lake at different elevations, starting at the largest size of the lake at its peak or flood stage, and working downward to the base elevation (deepest pools in the lake).

Two elevation data sets were used to develop the terrain model for Lake Easy. Light Detection and Ranging Data (LiDAR) was processed with LP360 for ArcGIS and merged with bathymetric data collected with both sonar and mechanical (manual) methods. These data were collected using a LEI HS-WSPK transducer (operating frequency = 192kHz, cone angle = 20) mounted to a boat hull, a Lowrance LMS-350A sonar-based depth finder and the Trimble GPS Pathfinder Pro XR/Mapping System (Pro XR GPS Receiver, Integrated GPS/MSK Beacon Antenna, TDC1 Asset Surveyor and Pathfinder Office software).

The DEM created from the combined elevation data sets was used to develop topographic contours of the lake basin and to create a triangulated irregular network (TIN). The TIN was used to calculate the stage areas and volumes using a Python script file to iteratively run the Surface Volume tool in the Functional Surface toolset of the ESRI® 3D Analyst toolbox at one-tenth of a foot elevation change increments. Selected stage-area-volume results are presented in Figure 14.

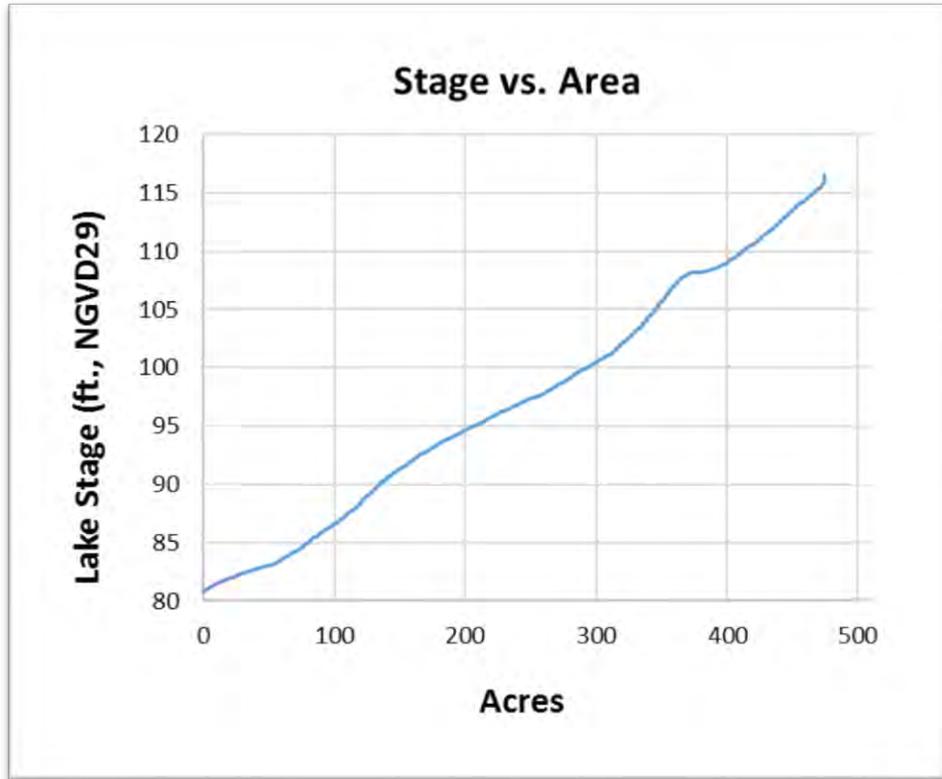


Figure 14: Lake Stage (Ft. NGVD29) to Surface Area (Acres).

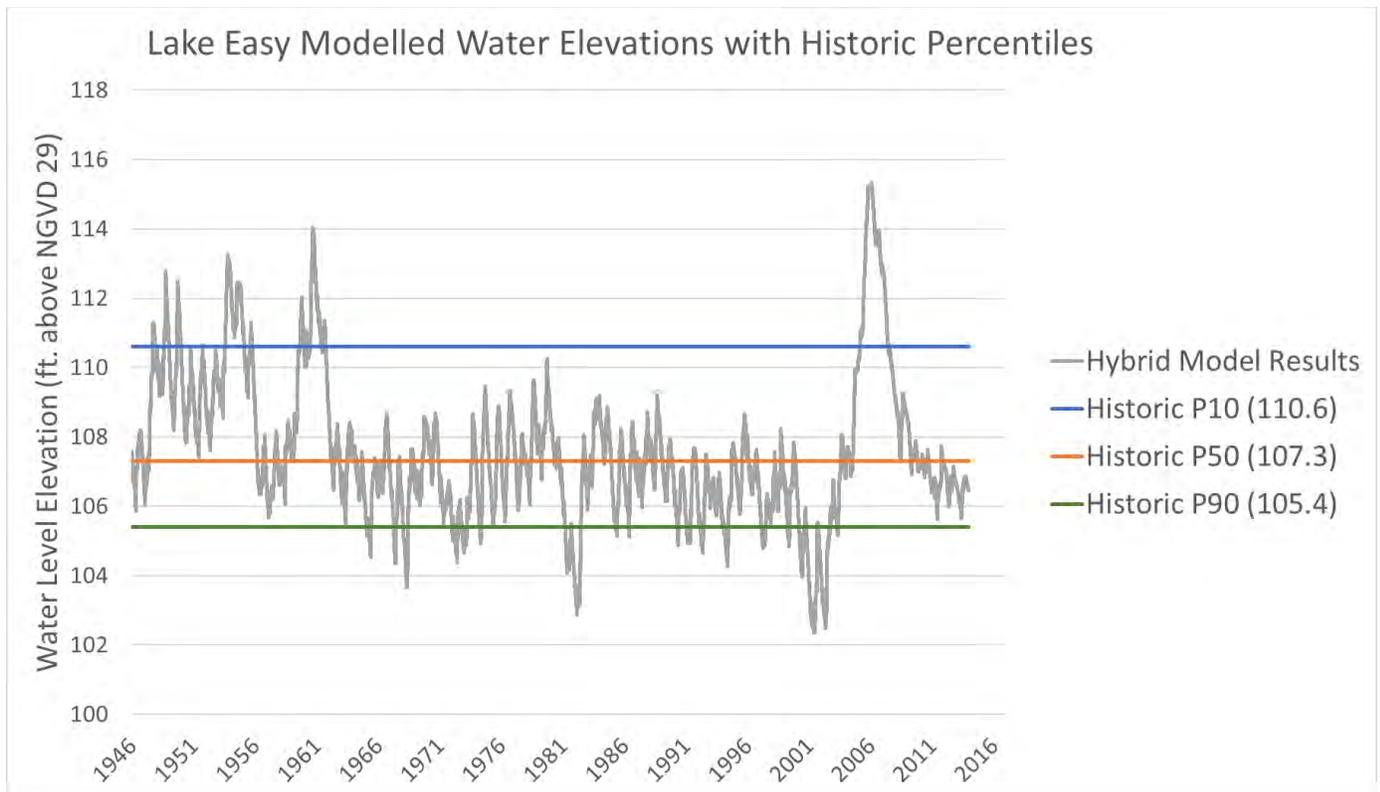
### ***Development of Exceedance Percentiles***

A key part of establishing Minimum and Guidance Levels is the development of exceedance percentiles based on Historic water levels (lake stage data). For the purpose of minimum levels determination, lake stage data are categorized as "Historic" for periods when there were no measurable impacts due to water withdrawals, and impacts due to structural alterations were similar to existing conditions. In the context of minimum levels development, "structural alterations" means man's physical alteration of the control point, or highest stable point along the outlet conveyance system of a lake, to the degree that water level fluctuations are affected.

Based on water-use estimates and analysis of lake water levels and regional ground water fluctuations, a modeling approach (Appendix A) was used to estimate Historic lake levels. This approach was considered appropriate for extending the period of record for lake stage values for developing Historic lake stage exceedance percentiles. Development of this stage record was considered necessary for characterization of the range of lake-stage fluctuations that could be expected based on long-term climatic cycles that have been shown to be associated with changes in regional hydrology (Enfield et al. 2001, Basso and Schultz 2003, Kelly 2004).

The initial approach included developing a water budget model which incorporated the effects of precipitation, evaporation, overland flow, and groundwater interactions (Appendix A). Using the results of the water budget model, regression modeling for lake stage predictions was conducted using a linear line of organic correlation statistical model (LOC) (see Helsel and Hirsch 1992). The procedure was used to derive the relationship between daily water surface elevations for Lake Easy and composite regional rainfall.

A combination of model data produced a hybrid model which resulted in a 70-year (1946-2016) Historic water level record. Based on this hybrid data, the Historic P10 elevation, i.e., the elevation of the lake water surface equaled or exceeded ten percent of the time, was 110.6 ft. The Historic P50, the elevation the lake water surface equaled or exceeded fifty percent of the time during the historic period, was 107.3 ft. The Historic P90, the lake water surface elevation equaled or exceeded ninety percent of the time during the historic period, was 105.4 ft. (Figure 15 and Table 2).



**Figure 15: Historic Water Levels (hybrid) Used to Calculate Percentile Elevations Including P10, P50, and P90.**

***Normal Pool Elevation and Additional Information***

The Normal Pool elevation, a reference elevation used for development of minimum lake and wetland levels, is established based on the elevation of hydrologic indicators of sustained inundation. The inflection points (buttress swelling) and moss collars on the trunks of cypress trees have been shown to be reliable biologic indicators of hydrologic Normal Pool (Carr et al. 2006). As Lake Easy does not have sufficient cypress trees with adequate hydrologic indicators, a Normal Pool elevation was not determined.

Additional information to consider in establishing Minimum and Guidance Levels are the Control Point elevation and the lowest building floor (slab) elevation within the lake basin (determined by field survey data). The Control Point elevation is the elevation of the highest stable point along the outlet profile of a surface water conveyance system that can principally control the lake water level fluctuations at the high end. As Lake Easy does not have an outlet, there is no Control Point to consider in setting Minimum Levels. The low floor slab, based on survey reports, was established at 119.64 ft.

### **Guidance Levels**

The High Guidance Level (HGL) is provided as an advisory guideline for construction of lakeshore development, water dependent structures, and operation of water management structures. The High Guidance Level is the expected Historic P10 of the lake, and is established using Historic data if it is available, or is estimated using the Current P10, the Control Point elevation and the Normal Pool elevation. Based on the availability of Historic data developed for Lake Easy, the High Guidance Level was established at the Historic P10 elevation, 110.6 ft. Gauged data indicate that the highest levels reached were in the summer of 2005 through the winter of 2006, with a peak of 113.2 ft. in December 2005.

The Low Guidance Level (LGL) is provided as an advisory guideline for water dependent structures, and as information for lakeshore residents and operation of water management structures. The Low Guidance Level is the elevation that a lake's water levels are expected to equal or exceed ninety percent of the time on a long-term basis. The level is established using Historic or Current lake stage data and, in some cases, reference lake water regime statistics. Reference lake water regime statistics are used when adequate Historic or Current data are not available. These statistics represent differences between P10, P50 and P90 lake stage elevations for typical, regional lakes that exhibit little or no impacts associated with water withdrawals, i.e., reference lakes. Reference lake water regime statistics include the RLWR50, RLWR90 and RLWR5090, which are, respectively, median differences between P10 and P50, P10 and P90, and P50 and P90 lake stage percentiles for a set of reference lakes. Based on the availability of Historic data for Lake Easy, the Low Guidance Level was established at the Historic P90 elevation, 105.4 ft. The gaged period of record indicates the lowest recorded elevation was 100.8 ft., below the low guidance level, in May 2002 (Figure 13). The most recent record of the water level dropping below the low guidance level was in August 2014, with a recorded level of 105.2 ft.

### **Significant Change Standards**

Category 3 significant change standards were established for Lake Easy based on the stage-area-volume relationship which was developed. These standards include a Recreation/Ski Standard, Dock-Use Standard, Wetland Offset Elevation, Aesthetics Standard, Species Richness Standard, Basin Connectivity Standard, and Lake Mixing Standard. Each was evaluated for minimum levels development for Lake Easy and presented in Table 2.

- The **Recreation/Ski Standard** was established at an elevation of 89.4 ft. based on a ski elevation of 82.5 ft. and the difference between the Historic P50 – P90 of 1.9 ft.
- The **Dock-Use Standard** was established at an elevation of 109.8 ft. based on the elevation of lake sediments at the end of 6 docks on the lake, a 2-ft. clearance depth, and the difference between the Historic P50 – P90 of 1.9 ft.
- The **Wetland Offset Elevation** was established at 106.5 ft., or 0.8 ft. below the historic P50 elevation.
- The **Aesthetic-Standard** for Lake Easy was established at the Low Guidance Level elevation of 105.4 ft.
- The **Species Richness Standard** was established at 101.0 ft., based on a 15% reduction in lake surface area from that at the Historic P50 elevation.
- The **Basin Connectivity Standard** was not applicable as the lake does not have multiple basins.
- The **Lake Mixing Standard** was established at an elevation of 85.6 ft., where the dynamic ratio shifts from a value of less than 0.8 to greater than 0.8, indicating that potential changes in basin susceptibility to wind-induced sediment resuspension would not be of concern for minimum levels development (see Bachmann *et al.* 2000).

Review of changes in potential herbaceous wetland area associated with change in lake stage (Figure 16), and potential changes in area available for aquatic plant colonization (Figure 17) did not indicate that use of any of the identified standards would be inappropriate for minimum levels development. Figure 16 shows that as the lake stage increases, the acres available for herbaceous wetland area (acres < 4 ft.) also increase, up until around 85 ft. NGVD. The acres available for herbaceous wetlands then decrease as the lake becomes deeper. Figure 16 shows that the area continues to increase and decrease again, due to the bathymetry of the lake and additional lobes being incorporated into the main lake area as the stage rises. Similarly, the area available for aquatic plant colonization (acres < 15.8 ft.) follows the same trend of increasing until a threshold point. The changes in the slope of the lines reflects the variation in lake bottom contours and the area which it contains (Figure 17).

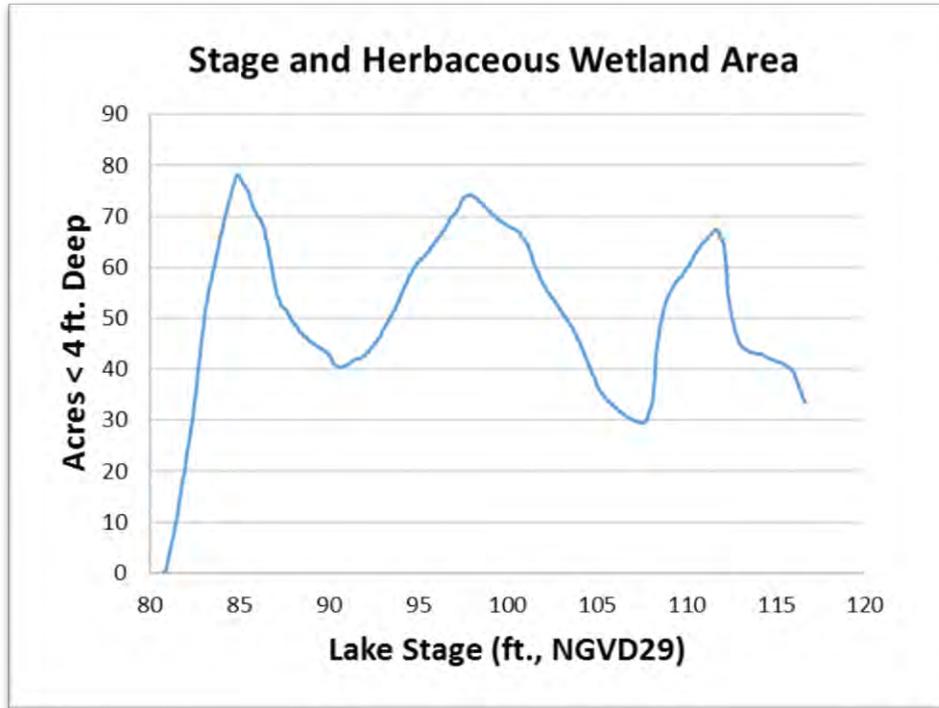


Figure 16: Lake Stage Compared to Available Herbaceous Wetland Area.

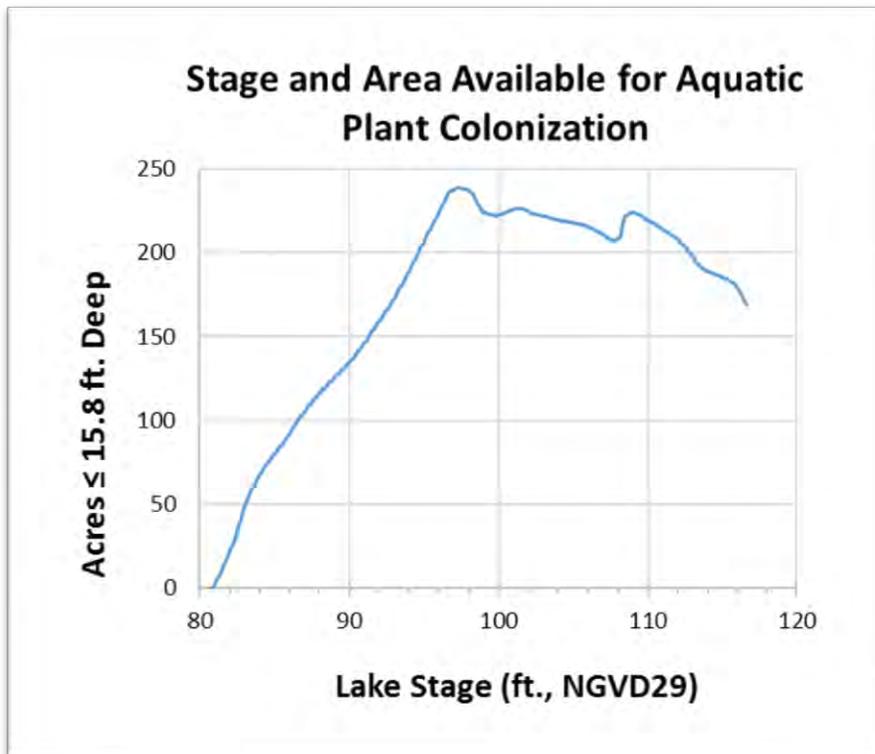


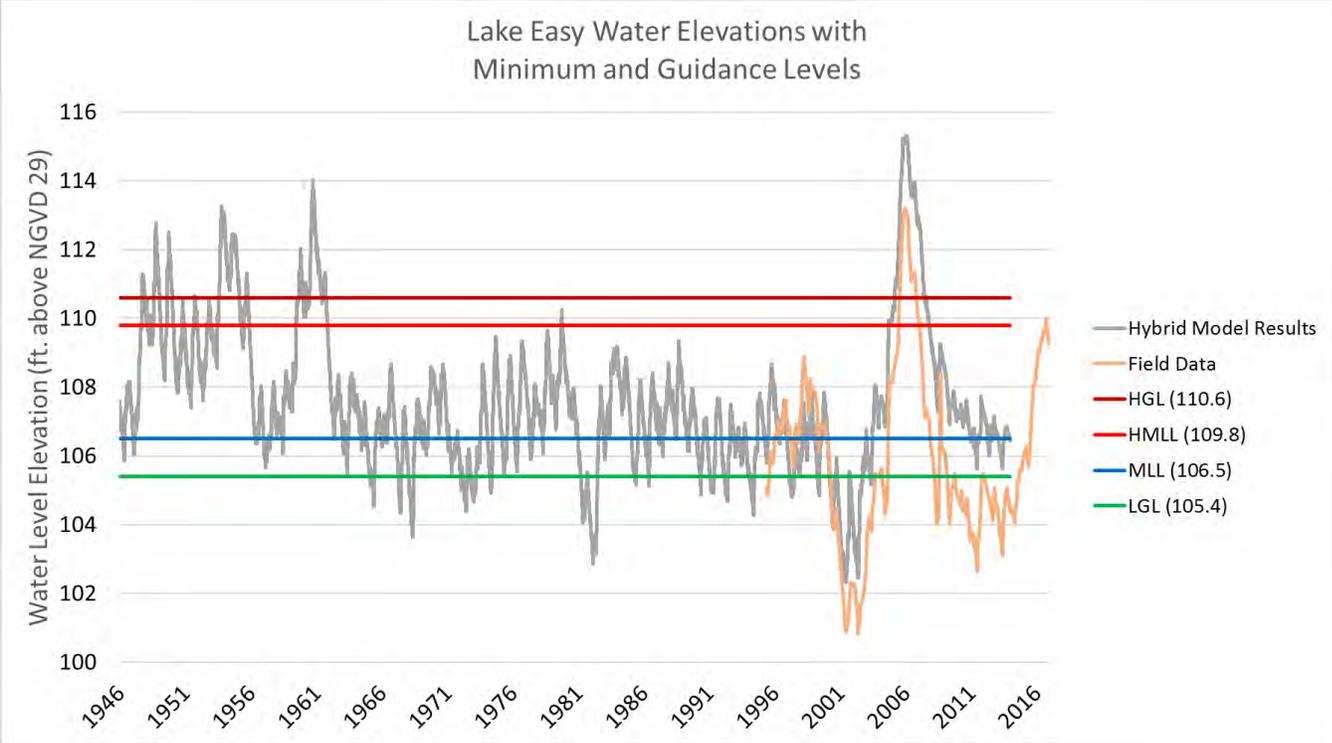
Figure 17: Lake Stage and Area Available for Aquatic Plant Colonization.

### ***Minimum Levels***

The Minimum Lake Level (MLL) is the elevation that a lake's water levels are required to equal or exceed fifty percent of the time on a long-term basis. For a Category 3 lake, the Minimum Lake Level is established using a process that considers applying professional experience and judgement, and the Standards previously listed. The MLL for Lake Easy is established at the Wetland Offset elevation of 106.5 ft.

The High Minimum Lake Level (HMLL) is the elevation that a lake's water levels are required to equal or exceed ten percent of the time on a long-term basis. For a Category 3 lake, Rule 40D-8.624, F.A.C. allows for the HMLL to be established using one of two methods. The High Minimum Lake Level is established at the elevation corresponding to the Minimum Lake Level plus the difference between the Historic P10 and the Historic P50, or alternatively, the HMLL is established at the elevation corresponding to the MLL plus the RLWR value. Due to the availability of Historic percentiles, the HMLL was established using the first method, resulting in a HMLL of 109.8 ft. This elevation accounts for a natural fluctuation of lake levels.

Minimum and Guidance levels for Lake Easy are plotted on the Historic water level record (Figure 18). To illustrate the approximate locations of the lake margin when water levels equal the minimum levels, the levels are imposed onto a 2014 natural color aerial photograph in Figure 19.



**Figure 18: Historic water levels used to calculate the Minimum and Guidance Levels along with field collected water level data, Guidance, and Minimum lake levels for Lake Easy.**



**Figure 19: Lake Easy Minimum and Guidance Level Contour Lines Imposed onto a 2014 Natural Color Aerial Photograph.**

Many federal, state, and local agencies, such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, United States Geological Survey, and Florida’s water management districts are in the process of upgrading from the National Geodetic Vertical Datum (NGVD29) standard to the North American Vertical Datum (NAVD88) standard. For comparison purposes, the MFLs for Lake Easy are presented in both datum standards (Table 3). The datum shift was calculated based on third-order leveling ties from vertical survey control stations with known elevations above the North American Vertical Datum on 1988. The NGVD29 datum conversion to NAVD88 is -1.19 ft. for SID 793583 on Lake Easy.

**Table 3: Minimum and Guidance Levels for Lake Easy in NGVD29 and NAVD88.**

Minimum and Guidance Levels	Elevation in Feet NGVD29	Elevation in Feet NAVD88
High Guidance Level	110.6	109.4
High Minimum Lake Level	109.8	108.6
Minimum Lake Level	106.5	105.3
Low Guidance Level	105.4	104.2

## Consideration of Environmental Values

The minimum levels for Lake Easy are protective of relevant environmental values identified for consideration in the Water Resource Implementation Rule when establishing minimum flows and levels (see Rule 62-40.473, F.A.C.). As presented above, when developing minimum lake levels, the District evaluates categorical significant change standards and other available information to identify criteria that are sensitive to long-term changes in hydrology and represent significant harm thresholds. The Wetland Offset Elevation was used for developing Minimum Levels for Lake Easy based on its classification as a Category 3 lake. This standard is associated with protection of several environmental values identified in Rule 62-40.473, F.A.C., including: fish and wildlife habitats and the passage of fish, transfer of detrital material, aesthetic and scenic attributes, filtration and absorption of nutrients and other pollutants, and water quality (Table 1).

In addition, the environmental value of maintenance of freshwater storage and supply is also expected to be protected by the minimum levels based on inclusion of conditions in water use permits that stipulate permitted withdrawals will not lead to violation of adopted minimum flows and levels.

Two environmental values identified in the Water Resource Implementation Rule were not considered relevant to development of minimum levels for Lake Easy. Estuarine resources were not considered relevant because the lake is not connected to an estuarine resource. Sediment loads were similarly not considered relevant for minimum levels development for the lake, because the transport of sediments as bedload or suspended load is a process typically associated with flowing water systems.

## Minimum Levels Status Assessment

To assess if the Minimum and High Minimum Lake Levels are being met, observed stage data in Lake Easy were used to create a long-term record using a Line of Organic Correlation (LOC) model, similar to what was developed for establishing the Minimum Levels (Appendix A). For the status assessment, the lake stage data used to create the LOC must be from a period representing a time when groundwater withdrawals and structural alterations are reasonably stable, and represent current conditions, referred to as the “Current” period. Current stage data observed on Lake Easy were determined to be from 2004 through 2016. Using the Current stage data, the LOC model was created. The LOC model resulted in a 70-year long-term water level record (1946-2016).

For the status assessment, cumulative median (P50) and cumulative P10 water elevations were compared to the Minimum Lake Level and High Minimum Lake Level to determine if long-term water levels were above these levels. Results from these assessments indicate that Lake Easy water levels are below both the Minimum Lake Levels and the High Minimum Lake Levels (see Appendix B).

The lake lies within the region of the District covered by an existing recovery strategy for the Southern Water Use Caution Area (Rule 40D80-074, F.A.C.). The District plans to continue regular monitoring of water levels in Lake Easy and will also routinely evaluate the status of the lake’s water levels with respect to adopted minimum levels for the lake included in Chapter 40D-8, F.A.C.

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# APPENDIX A

## Draft Technical Memorandum

July 10, 2017

TO: Donna Campbell, Environmental Scientist, Water Resources Bureau

THROUGH: Tamera McBride, P.G., Manager, Water Resources Bureau

FROM: Jason G. Patterson, Hydrogeologist, Water Resources Bureau  
Don Ellison, P.G., Senior Hydrogeologist, Water Resources Bureau

**Subject: Lake Easy Water Budget Model, Rainfall Regression Model, and Historic Percentile Estimations**

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### A. Introduction

Water budget and rainfall regression models were developed to assist the Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) in the assessment of minimum levels for Lake Easy, located in south-central Polk County. A proposed minimum level for Lake Easy is scheduled to be established in FY 2017. This document will discuss the development of the Lake Easy models and use of the models for development of Historic lake stage exceedance percentiles using those models.

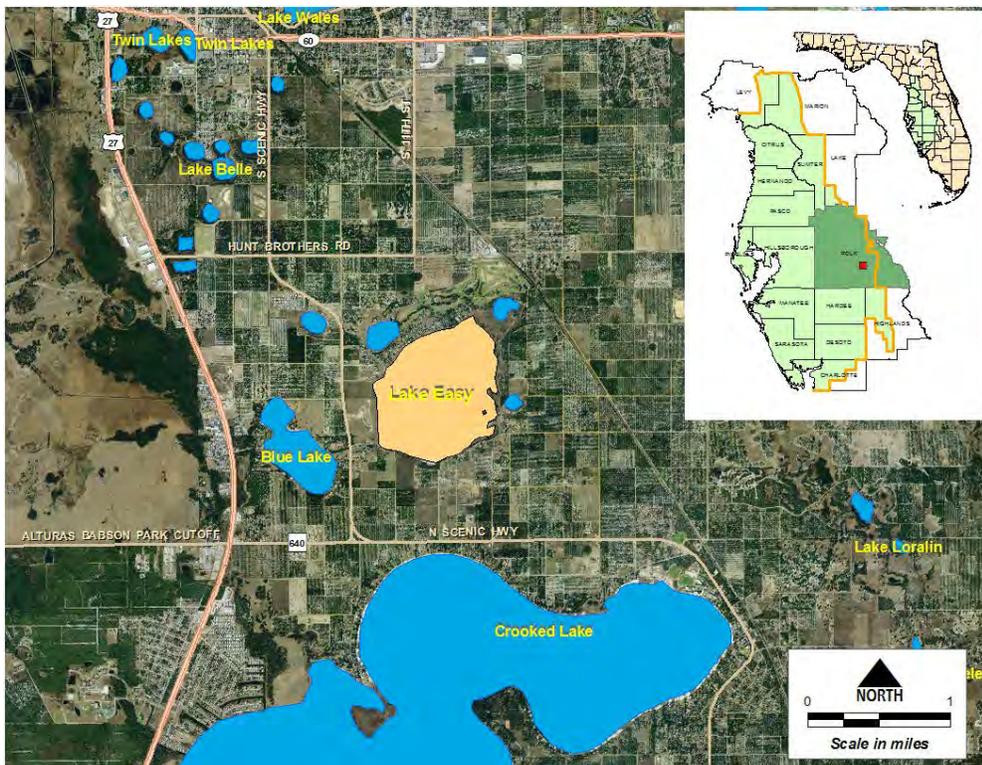
### B. Background and Setting

Lake Easy is located in east-central Polk County, east of U.S. Highway 27 between Hunt Brothers Rd to the north and N Scenic HWY to the south in the City of Lake Wales (Figure 1). The lake is located on the Lake Wales Ridge and is within the Kissimmee River watershed. There are no major natural surface water systems draining into and out of the lake basin, however, surface inflows from Lake Amoret have occurred based on review of historic aerials. There are currently no permitted surface water withdrawals from the lake; however, there are numerous groundwater withdrawals in the vicinity.

#### Physiography

Lake Easy is situated between the eastern and western boundaries of a north-south oriented ridge (the Lake Wales Ridge) that is approximately 100 miles long and ranges from four to ten miles wide (Figure 1). The area surrounding the lake is categorized as the Iron Mountains in the Central Lake Physiographic District (Brooks, 1981). It is a

sub-region of the Lakes Wales Ridge and contains very high sand hills underlain by sand, gravel, and clayey sand that are deeply weathered. The Lake Wales Ridge area is predominantly well-drained and has internal drainage caused by numerous karst features; hence it is an uplands recharge area for the Upper Floridan aquifer in Central Polk and Highlands counties. Dissolution of the underlying limestone creates the relief seen in the Lake Wales Ridge. The Lake Wales Ridge Complex is a remnant of a broader upland that has been eroded and lowered by sea level fluctuations, fluvial erosion, and Aeolian redistribution of sediments (Green et al., 2012). The lake is on the western edge of a north-south trending ridge that slopes downward to the east and west. Elevations within the immediate watershed range from the lake edge at about 106 feet to nearly 198 feet NAVD 88 on the south side of the lake.



**Figure 1. Location of Lake Easy in Polk County, Florida**

Hydrogeology

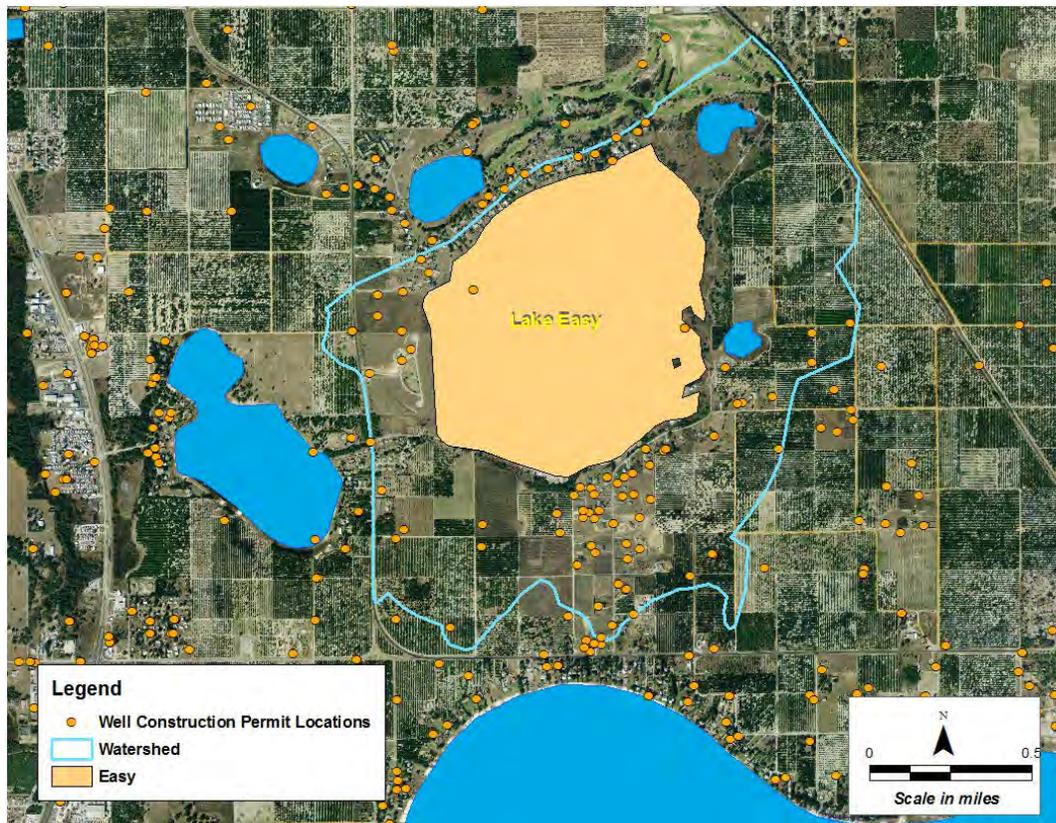
The hydrogeology of the area includes a sand surficial aquifer; a clay confining unit perforated by karst features (sinkholes); and the thick carbonate Upper Floridan aquifer (Spechler and Kroening, 2007). The majority of lakes in the study area are sinkhole lakes that originated through collapse of solution-enlarged features in the underlying Floridan aquifer (Barcelo and others, 1990). Lake Easy is most likely a sinkhole lake. A Well Completion Report (permit #687413) describe sinkhole features near the lake

shore. Sinkholes can provide more direct avenues for water from the surficial aquifer to recharge the underlying Upper Floridan aquifer. Lateral movement of water through the surficial aquifer can be affected by individual lake basins because of the rolling topography, but there is also a sub-regional component to flows. The surficial aquifer is recharged by area rainfall; however, much of the rain that falls drains into lakes or is lost to evapotranspiration. Other sources of recharge that are applied to land include wastewater, reclaimed water, septic effluent, and irrigation of agricultural land or landscape areas (Spechler and Kroening, 2007). In elevated areas, such as the Lake Wales Ridge, the water table generally is a subdued reflection of land-surface topography (Yobbi, 1996). The Hawthorn aquifer system (formerly called the Intermediate aquifer system) consisting mostly of interbedded clay, silt, phosphate, and sand is present and serves as a confining unit between the Upper Floridan aquifer and Lake Easy.

Stratigraphy near Lake Easy can be described by a number of well completion reports drilled for domestic supply and irrigation wells within and near the Lake Easy watershed (figure 2). A subset of well completion reports were looked at to describe the stratigraphy near Lake Easy due to the high number of well construction permits located within the watershed. The surficial aquifer is present at all sites ranging from 100 feet to as much as 190 feet below land surface datum (LSD). The stratigraphy at the well sites is typical of the area, as the surficial aquifer generally thickens toward the east, especially along the southern part of the Lake Wales Ridge where the thickness can exceed 200 feet. The surficial aquifer is considered the uppermost water-bearing unit and is recharged primarily by the infiltration of rainfall. Most rainfall within the area of Lake Easy drains into the lake or is lost to evapotranspiration. The remaining rainfall recharges the surficial aquifer by percolating through unsaturated surficial deposits (Spechler and Kroening, 2007).

Spechler and Kroening (2007) report that the intermediate confining unit, or Hawthorn aquifer system is present throughout much of Polk County and is locally absent or thin in the extreme northwestern part of Polk County. The Hawthorn aquifer system was present in many of the well completion reports. It was mostly described in these reports as green/orange clay and sandy clays with a thickness ranging from 30 to 45 feet. The unit typically displays low to moderate porosity values with low permeability values.

Below the Hawthorn aquifer system lies the limestone of the Upper Floridan aquifer system that ranges from approximately 300 feet thick in eastern Polk County to more than 1,200 feet thick in the southwestern part of the county (Spechler and Kroening, 2007). The top of the Floridan aquifer system, the principal source of water for this area, ranged from 188 feet below LSD to 230 feet below LSD according to the well completion reports. The Floridan aquifer system here consisted mainly of calcarenitic limestone with some dolomite lenses.



**Figure 2. Well Construction Permit Locations**

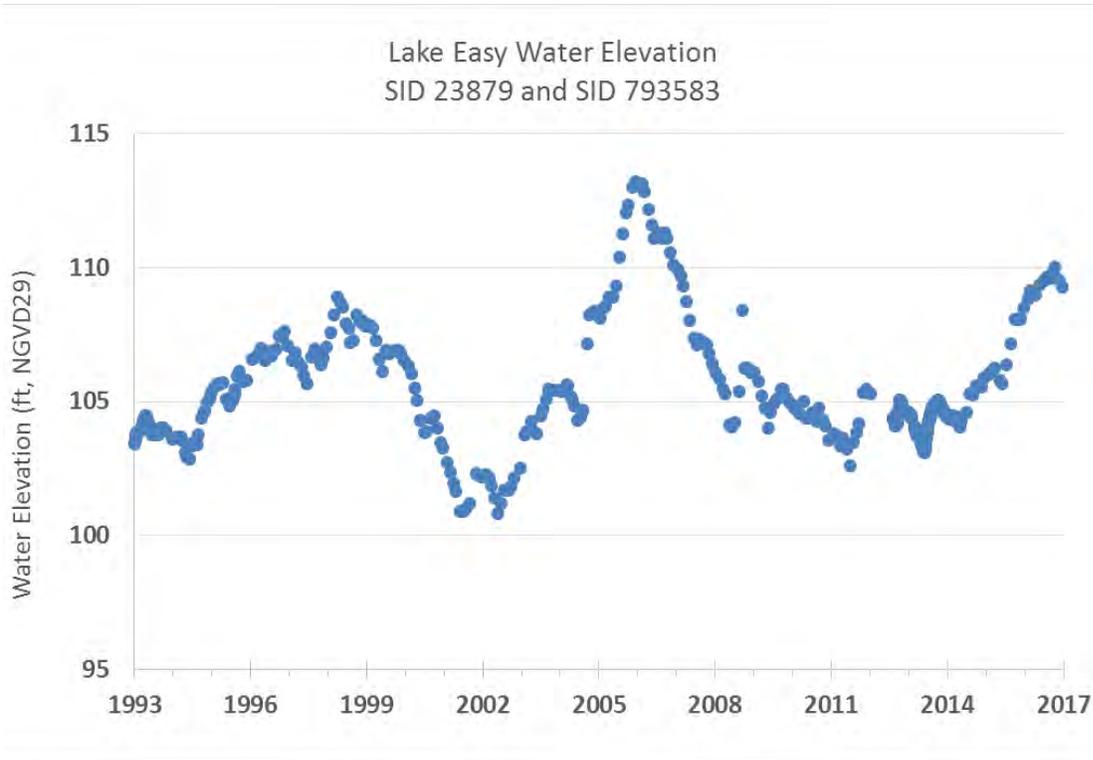
Data

Water level data collection at the Lake Easy staff gage (SID 23879) were collected daily to weekly from October 28, 1992 through October 20, 1993, and two to four times per month until December 28, 1994. From January, 1995 through November 2011 data collection were monthly. A new staff gage (SID 793583) was installed and began collecting daily data on August 8, 2012 until May 7, 2014 with a data gap from February 2, 2013 through February 27, 2014. From June 30, 2014 until December 19, 2016 data collected at the staff gage SID 793583 were monthly (Figure 3).

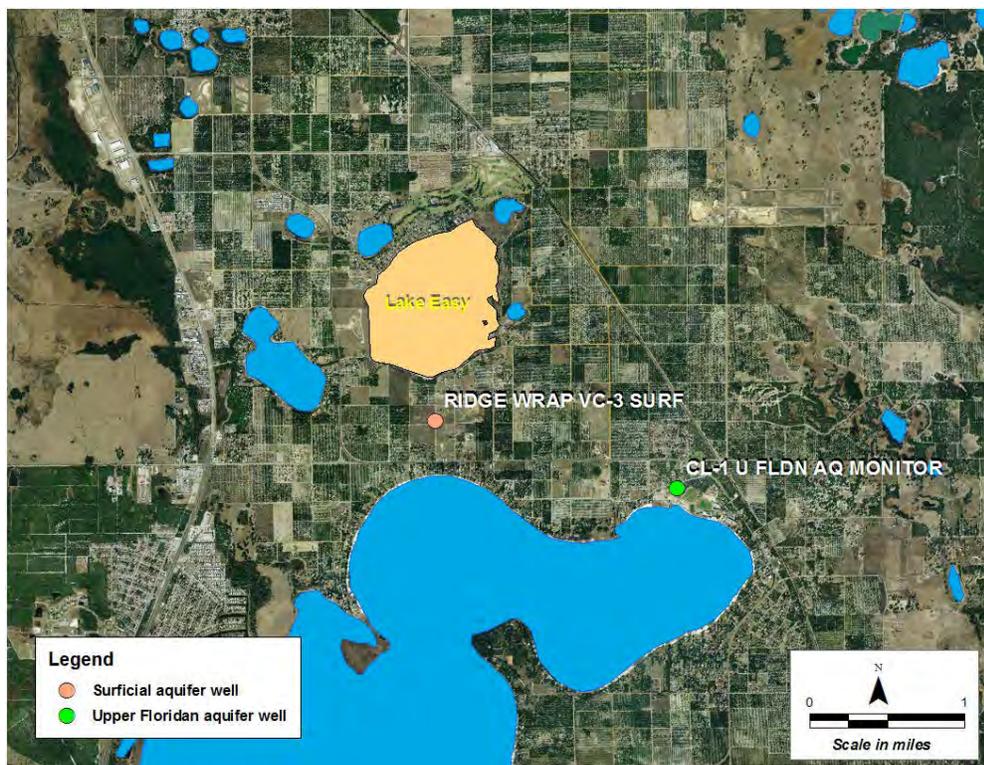
CL-1 Upper Floridan aquifer monitor well (SID 23973) was used for the water budget model for Lake Easy (Figure 4). The well is located approximately 1.5 miles southeast of Lake Easy. With the exception of a few missing periods, daily water levels measurements at CL-1 are available from October 1987 through current. Data gaps were infilled linearly for the duration of the water budget model. The largest data gap

was 28 days from February 1, 1994 through February 28, 1994. Data collection from 1/1/2004 to 12/31/2016 is daily with no significant data gaps.

RIDGE WRAP VC-3 SURF surficial aquifer monitor well (SID 23892) was used for the water budget model for Lake Easy. The well is located approximately 0.25 miles south of Lake Easy. Frequency of data collection ranges from weekly to monthly from October 5, 1989 through December 31, 2003. Data collection from January 1, 2004 to December 31, 2016 is monthly with only two months missing data.



**Figure 3. Lake Easy water levels**



**Figure 4. Location of monitoring wells near Lake Easy**

Land and Water Use

Land and water use in the area of Lake Easy has changed over the years. Figure 4 shows the land use around Lake Easy in 1941 and Figure 5 shows 2011 land use/land cover with 2012 aerial imagery. Much of the land use in 1941 consisted of citrus groves, agriculture, a golf course and very little residential development near the lake. Today, land use and water use have changed, but is still primarily agriculture (Figures 5 through 7, and Table 1). Water use data from the Expanded East Central Florida Transient (ECFTX) model was used to estimate the groundwater use average from 2010 to 2014. The average estimated groundwater use within one mile of the lake is approximately 2.3 million gallons per day (mgd), of which almost all (93 percent) is agriculture use. Within 5 miles of the lake, the estimated average groundwater use is approximately 19.9 mgd, of which 67 percent is agricultural use, 14 percent is for public supply, 13 percent is for commercial/industrial and mining/dewatering, and 5 percent is for recreation.



Figure 5. Land use around Lake Easy in 1941

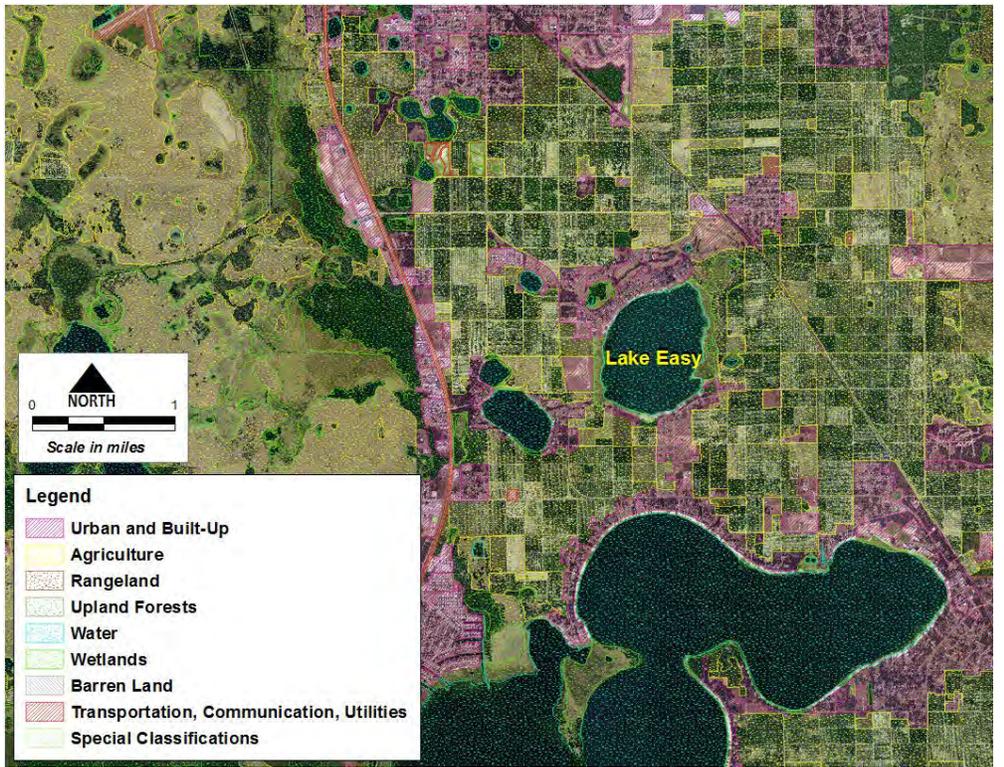
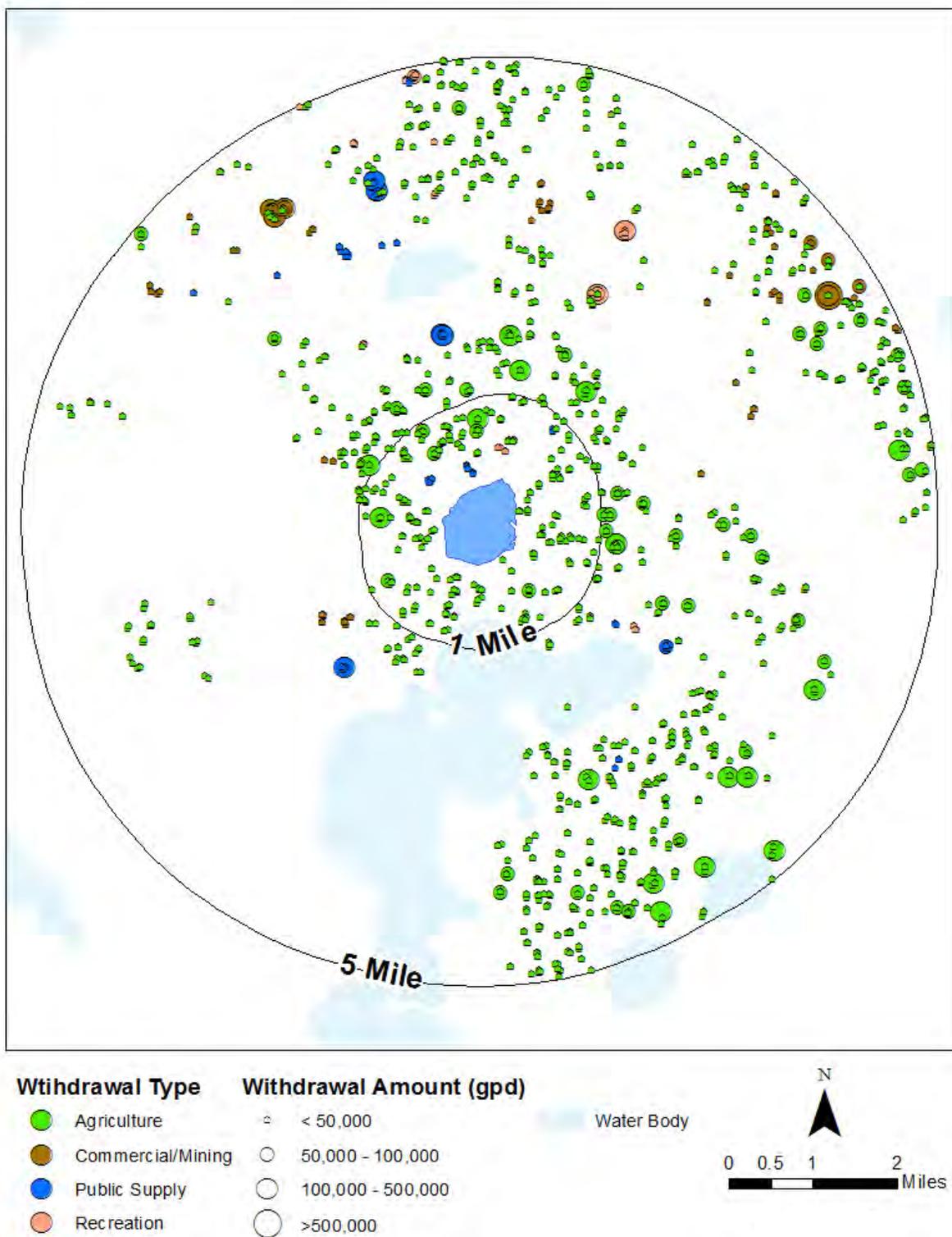


Figure 6. Land use/land cover in 2011 shown on 2012 aerial imagery



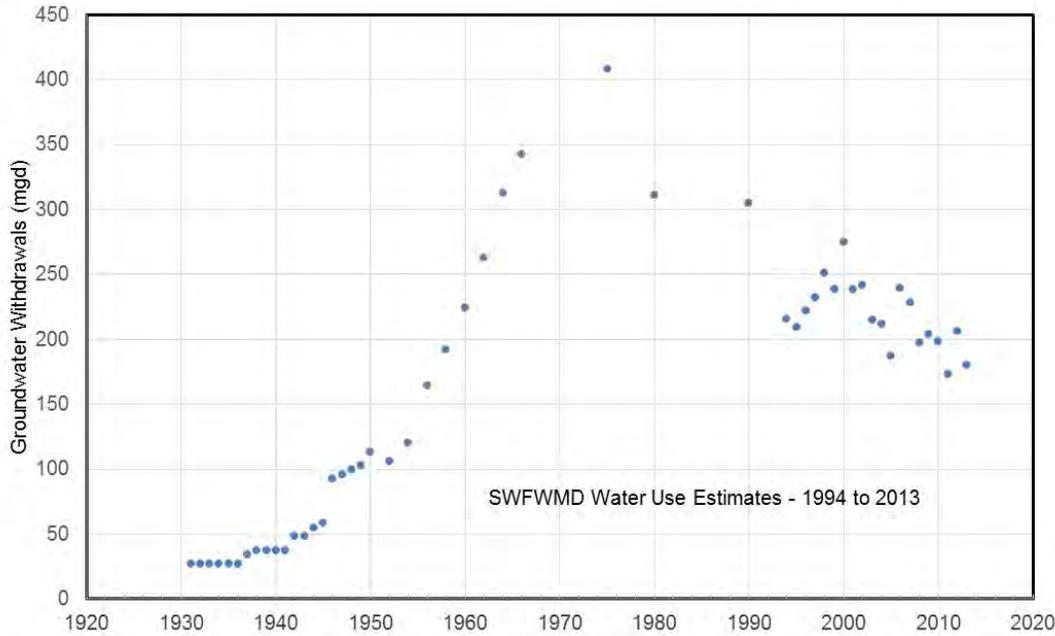
**Figure 7. Lake Easy withdrawal locations**

**Table 1. Water Use in the Lake Easy area (2010-2014 average)**

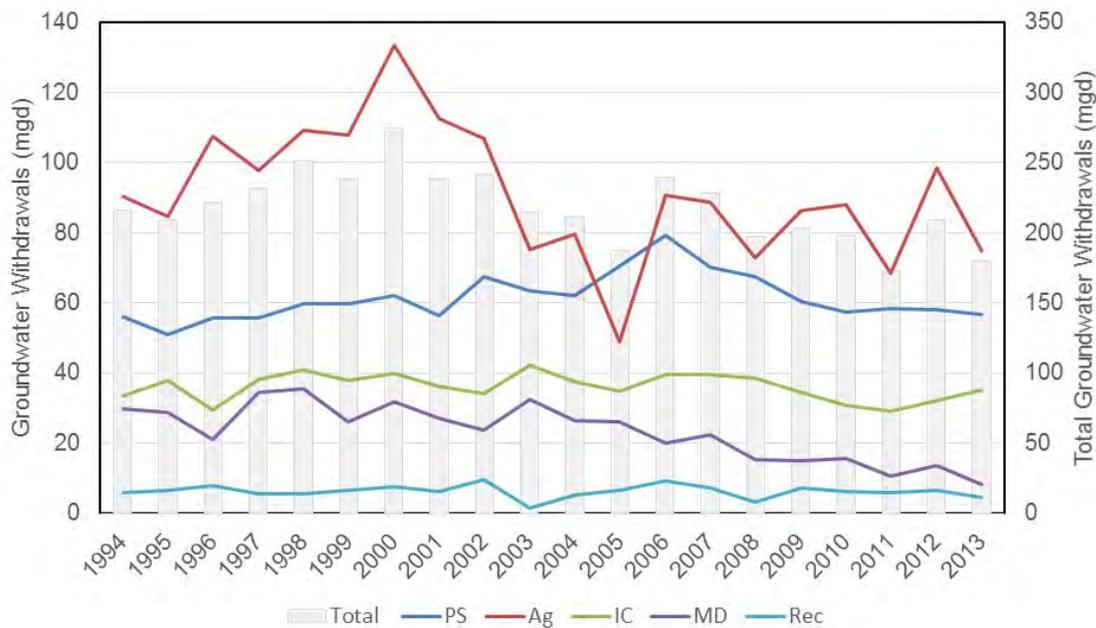
<b>Water Use Within 1 Mile of Lake Easy (gpd)</b>			
<b>Use Type</b>	<b>SW</b>	<b>GW</b>	<b>Total</b>
Agriculture	-	2,176,363	2,176,363
Commercial/Mining	-	23,131	23,131
Public Supply	-	31,316	31,316
Recreation	-	104,059	104,059
<b>Total</b>	-	2,334,868	2,334,868
<b>Water Use Within 5 Mile of Lake Easy (gpd)</b>			
<b>Use Type</b>	<b>SW</b>	<b>GW</b>	<b>Total</b>
Agriculture	341,271	13,399,329	13,740,599
Commercial/Mining	23,988	2,648,739	2,672,727
Public Supply	-	2,856,647	2,856,647
Recreation	-	1,006,283	1,006,283
<b>Total</b>	365,259	19,910,998	20,276,257

Figure 8 presents total estimated and measured groundwater withdrawals in Polk County since the 1930s (updated from Southwest Florida Water Management District, 2006). Significant groundwater withdrawals began in the area throughout the 1940s and 1950s, and peaked in late 1960s and early 1970s. Groundwater withdrawals in Polk County have been relatively stable since the early to mid-1990s, although this period includes both extreme dry (2000) and wet (2004/2005) conditions. Since 1994, estimated groundwater withdrawals in Polk County averaged about 218 mgd and ranged from 172 mgd in 2011 to 274 mgd in 2000.

Figure 9 shows that the most recent 5-year period reflects reduced withdrawal amounts compared to earlier years shown in this figure. This is especially evident for agriculture and mining/dewatering uses. Public supply withdrawals, however, increased and peaked in 2006, but have returned to previous withdrawal levels. Factors that have been cited for declines in agricultural use include uncertainties associated with citrus greening and canker and increased urbanization, which is reflected in reductions in citrus acres in the county. The economic recession that began in the mid 2000's is often cited as a potential influence in the more recent reductions in public supply withdrawals. Because permitted groundwater withdrawal quantities have remained fairly constant (with the exception of changes in how agriculture is permitted in the Southern Water Use Caution Area (SWUCA) since 2003), the permanency of these declines is uncertain. However, the District continues to work with users to develop alternative supplies to meet water demands.

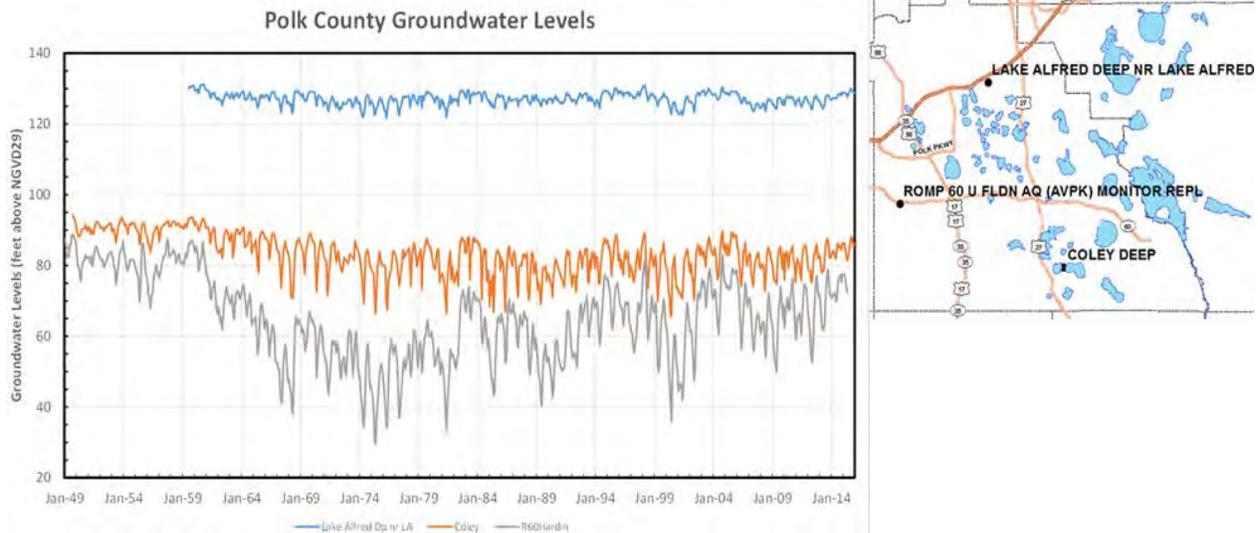


**Figure 8. Total groundwater withdrawals in Polk County**



**Figure 9. Estimated groundwater use in Polk County by use type (1994-2013)**

Though there have been periods of higher and lower pumping since the early 1990s, groundwater levels have been reasonably stable, especially in the more northern portions of the County. Figure 10 presents long-term water levels for three key wells in the region. Water levels in the ROMP 60 and Coley Deep wells indicate slight increases in the annual average levels over this time period.



**Figure 10. Long-term groundwater levels in Polk County**

### C. Purpose of Models

Prior to establishment of Minimum Levels, long-term lake stage percentiles are developed to serve as the starting elevations for the determination of the lake’s High Minimum Lake Level and the Minimum Lake Level. A critical task in this process is the delineation of a Historic time period. The Historic time period is defined as a period of time when there is little to no groundwater withdrawal impact on the lake, and the lake’s structural condition is similar or the same as present day. The existence of data from a Historic time period is significant, since it provides the opportunity to establish strong predictive relationships between rainfall, groundwater withdrawals, and lake stage fluctuation that represent the lake’s natural state in the absence of groundwater withdrawals. This relationship can be used to calculate Long-term Historic lake stage exceedance percentiles such as the P10, P50, and P90, which are, respectively, the water levels equaled or exceeded ten, fifty, and ninety percent of the time. If data representative of a Historic time period do not exist, or available Historic time period data is considered too short to represent long-term conditions, then a model is developed to approximate Long-term Historic data.

In the case of Lake Easy, withdrawals throughout the area have potentially affected water levels in the lake since the early 1940s. No data from Lake Easy exist prior to the initiation of groundwater withdrawals. Therefore, the development of a water budget model coupled with a rainfall correlation model of the lake was considered essential for

estimating long-term Historic percentiles, accounting for changes in the lake's drainage system, and simulating effects of changing groundwater withdrawal rates.

#### **D. Water Budget Model Overview**

The Lake Easy water budget model is a spreadsheet-based tool that includes natural hydrologic processes and engineered alterations acting on the control volume of the lake. The control volume consists of the free water surface within the lake extending down to the elevation of the greatest lake depth. Using LiDAR and bathymetry data, a stage-volume curve was derived for the lake that produced a unique lake stage for any total water volume within the control volume.

The hydrologic processes in the water budget model include:

- a. Rainfall and evaporation
- b. Overland flow
- c. Inflow and discharge via channels
- d. Flow from and to the surficial aquifer
- e. Flow from and to the Upper Floridan aquifer

The water budget model uses a daily time step, and tracks inputs, outputs, and lake volume to calculate a daily estimate of lake levels. The water budget model for Lake Easy was calibrated for the period from 2004 to 2016. This period provides the best balance of using available data for all components of the water budget and the desire to develop a long-term water level record.

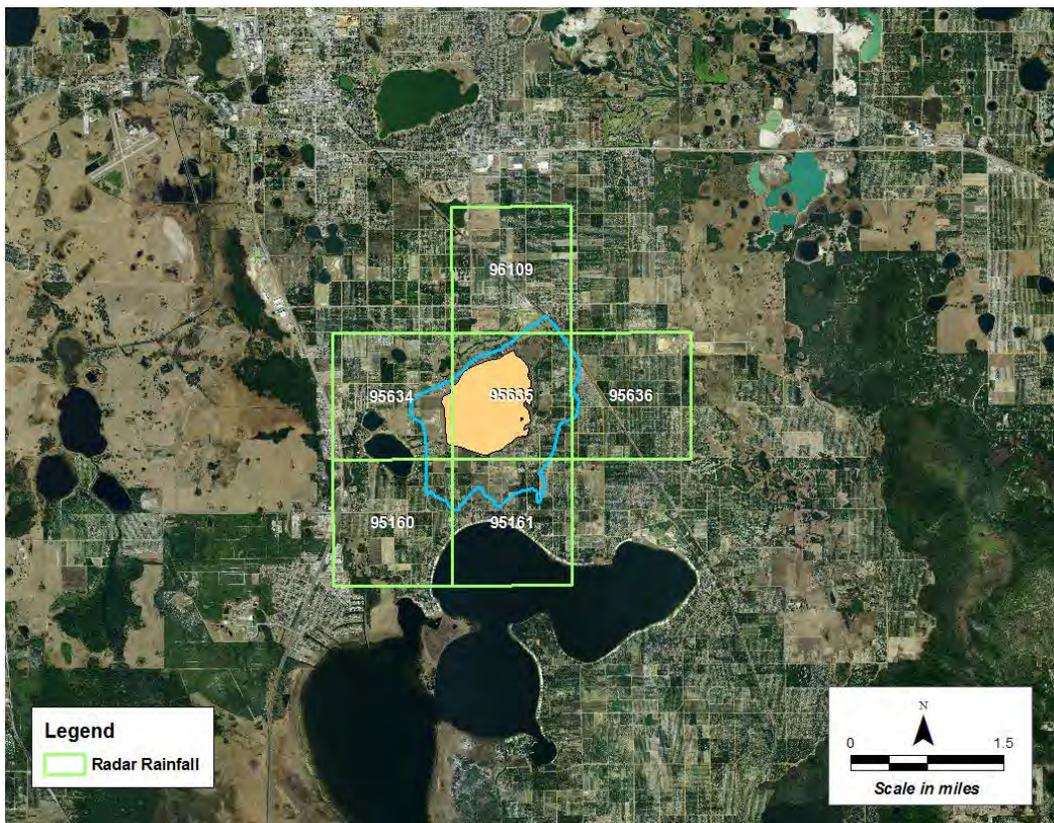
#### **E. Water Budget Model Components**

##### Lake Stage/Volume

Lake stage-area and stage-volume estimates were determined by building a terrain model of the lake and surrounding watersheds. Lake bottom elevations and land surface elevations were used to build the model with LP360 (by QCoherent) for ArcGIS, ESRI's ArcMap 10.2 the 3D Analyst ArcMap Extension, Python, and XTools Pro. The overall process involves merging the terrain morphology of the lake drainage basin with the underlying lake basin morphology to develop one continuous three-dimensional (3D) digital elevation model. The 3D digital elevation model was then used to calculate area of the lake and the associated volume of the lake at different elevations, starting at the extent of the lake at its flood stage and working downward to the lowest elevation within the basin.

## Precipitation

Precipitation data for the Water Budget model (January 1, 2004 through December 31, 2016) used an average of data for six NEXRAD pixels coinciding with the lake watershed (Figure 11). NEXRAD is a network of 160 high-resolution Doppler weather radars controlled by the NWS, Air Force Weather Agency, and Federal Aviation Administration. The NEXRAD data were used for the water budget model because it resulted in a better calibration of the water budget model than using the average or individual results of the gages located near the lake or used for the model period. NEXRAD data are expected to be available in the future, so they can be used for future status assessments.



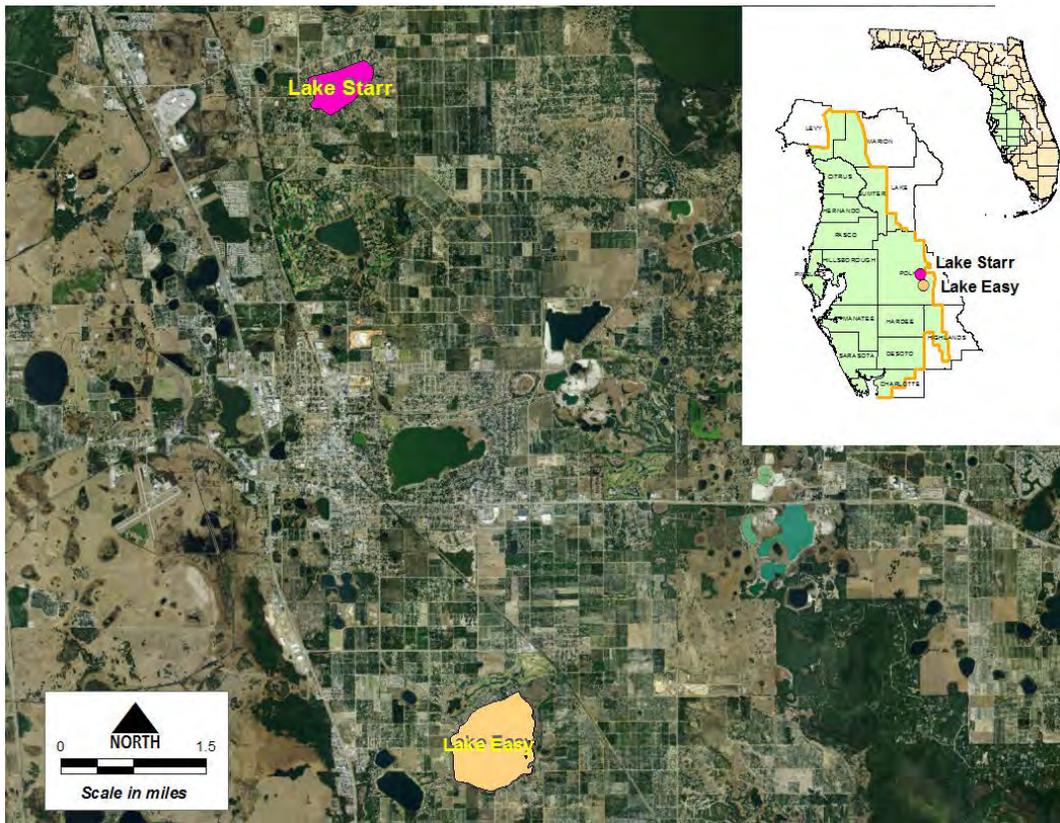
**Figure 11. NEXRAD grids assessed in the Lake Easy water budget model**

## Lake Evaporation

Lake evaporation was estimated through use of monthly energy budget evaporation data collected by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) at Lake Starr in Polk County (Swancar et al., 2000) (Figure 12). Lake Starr is located approximately 6.3 miles to the north of Lake Easy. The data were collected from August of 1996 through July of 2011. Monthly Lake Starr evaporation data were used in the water budget model when

available, and monthly averages for the period of record were used for those months when Lake Starr evaporation data were not available.

Jacobs (2007) produced daily potential evapotranspiration (PET) estimates on a 2-square kilometer grid for the entire state of Florida. The estimates began in 1995, and are updated annually. These estimates, available from the USGS, were calculated through the use of solar radiation data measured by a Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite (GOES). Because PET is equal to lake evaporation over open water areas, using the values derived from the grid nodes over the modeled lake was considered. A decision was made to instead use the Lake Starr evaporation data since the GOES data nodes typically include both upland and lake estimates, with no clear way of subdividing the two. It was thought that using the daily PET estimates based on the GOES data would increase model error more than using the Lake Starr data directly.



**Figure 12. Location of Lake Easy and Lake Starr**

### Overland Flow

The water budget model was set up to estimate overland flow via a modified version of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service (SCS) Curve Number method (SCS, 1972), and via directly connected impervious area calculations. The free water area of the lake was subtracted from the total watershed area at each time step to estimate the watershed area contributing to surface runoff. The directly connected impervious area (DCIA) is subtracted from the watershed area for the SCS calculation, and then added to the lake water budget separately. Additionally, the curve number (CN) chosen for the watershed of the lake only represents the portion of the watershed not accounted for with DCIA.

The modified SCS method was described and suggested for use in Florida by CH2M HILL (2003), and has been used in several other analyses. The modification adds a fourth category of antecedent moisture condition (AMC) to the original SCS method (SCS, 1972) to account for Florida's frequent rainfall events.

The lake is located on the western portion of the Lake Wales Ridge. 1-foot LiDAR-derived contours show land surface elevations within the watershed ranging from 198 feet at the southwest portion of the watershed to approximately 106 feet at the lake shore. LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) is a remote sensing method that measures variable distances to create three-dimensional information about the shape of the Earth's surface.

The watershed boundary was delineated using LiDAR data. Lake Easy has no significant inflow or outflow from or to other lakes or waterbodies. However, pre-2004 (Water Budget model period) there was a connection between Lake Amoret to Lake Easy. Lake Amoret is located just north of Lake Easy and flowed to the east and then south through a culvert into Lake Easy during high water elevation. It was determined not to model the connection between the lakes due to data collected during a recent field reconnaissance, review of aerial photography from 2001 through 2011 and LiDAR data showing the lakes have not been connected and flow has not occurred at least since 2004. Figure 13 shows the entire watershed for Lake Easy which consists of 1,247 acres (including the lake area of 407 acres).

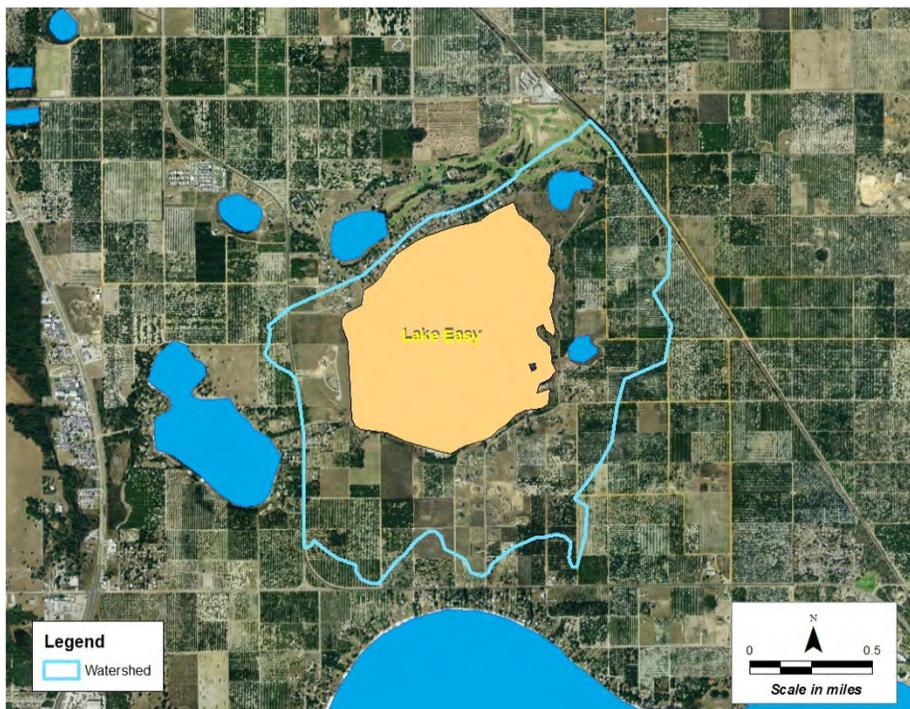
The DCIA and SCS CNs used for the direct overland flow portion of the watershed are listed in Table 2. The soils in the immediate lake watershed are approximately 65 percent "A" soils and the remaining 35 percent are A/D soils. The land use within the lake watershed is 45 percent tree crops, 23 percent open land, 19 percent low/mid residential dwelling and the remaining land use accounting for less than 13 percent.

A curve number (model calibration parameter) of 46 was used in the model and was considered reasonable given the local soil types, land use types and hydrologic

conditions. The DCIA parameter was used in addition to the curve number parameter to account for connected impervious areas that provide direct runoff to the lake through storm water systems. There are no significant natural surface water inflows to the lake, no directly connected drains for street and residential storm water, and no observed retention ponds. It was estimated that 5 percent of the watershed (model calibration parameter) is directly connected impervious area, which was considered reasonable given current land use types.

**Table 2. Model inputs for the Lake Easy water budget model**

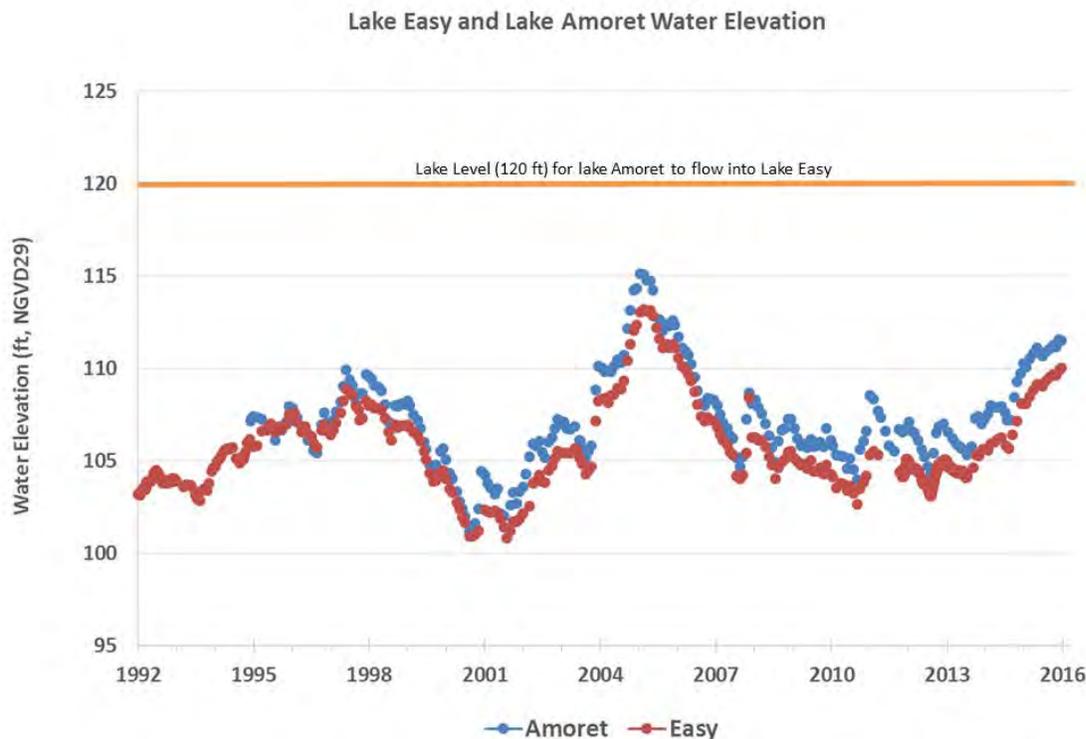
Input Variable	Value
Overland Flow Watershed Size (acres)	1247
SCS CN for watershed	47
Percent Directly Connected Area	5%
Upper Floridan Aquifer Monitor Well Used	CL-1 U FLDN AQ MONITOR
Surficial Aquifer Monitor Well Used	RIDGE WRAP VC-1 SURF
Upper Floridan Aquifer Leakance Coefficient (ft/day/ft)	0.00055
Surficial Aquifer Leakance Coefficient (ft/day/ft)	0.0028
Outflow K	N/A
Outflow Invert (ft NGVD 29)	N/A
Inflow K	N/A
Inflow Invert (ft NGVD 29)	~120



**Figure 13. The Lake Easy watershed**

### Inflow and Discharge via Channels from Outside Watersheds

Lake Easy is a closed basin lake with no current inflows or outflows. LiDAR-derived contours show the lowest land elevation at the edge of the watershed is located at the northern boundary where flow previously occurred from Lake Amoret to Lake Easy. It is unknown when flow between the lakes stopped, but a letter from the SWFWMD dated June 2, 1998 to property owner of the Highland Park Hills Golf Course mentions pre-1984 blockages in the ditch. It has been determined that flow from Lake Amoret into Lake Easy has not occurred during the Water Budget model calibration period (2004 through 2016). Currently, LiDAR data shows that Lake Amoret would flow into Lake Easy when water levels get above 120 ft. NAVD29. The maximum recorded water level data at Lake Amoret is 115.1 ft. NAVD29. Therefore, inflows from Lake Amoret were not considered when constructing the Lake Easy Water Budget model (figure 14).



**Figure 14. Water Elevation of Lake Easy and Lake Amoret**

### Flow from and into the surficial aquifer and Upper Floridan aquifer

Water exchange between Lake Easy and the underlying aquifers is estimated using a vertical leakance coefficient and the head difference between the lake and the aquifer levels. For each day of the simulation period, surficial aquifer and Upper Floridan

aquifer leakage volumes were calculated independently. Leakance coefficients for each aquifer were then determined through calibration.

#### *CL-1 Upper Floridan Monitor Well*

The CL-1 Upper Floridan aquifer well was used to represent the Upper Floridan aquifer fluctuation at the lake (Figures 4). During the water budget model calibration period data was collected daily from January 2006 to current with data gaps never exceeding 28 days. Missing data was infilled linearly. The well is located approximately 1.5 miles to the southeast of Lake Easy. Due to the distance from the well to the lake, an offset of 2.6 ft was subtracted from the data collected at the well. The offset was calculated by averaging the potentiometric surfaces in the Upper Floridan aquifer at the well and lake and taking the difference of the averages. The potentiometric surfaces were generated by the USGS on a biannual schedule of May and September in order to represent the wet and dry condition for each year. The USGS created potentiometric surfaces within the District annually from 1981 to 2011. Since the water budget model for Lake Easy extends back to 2004, only the 2004 through 2011 potentiometric surface maps were used to calculate the offset.

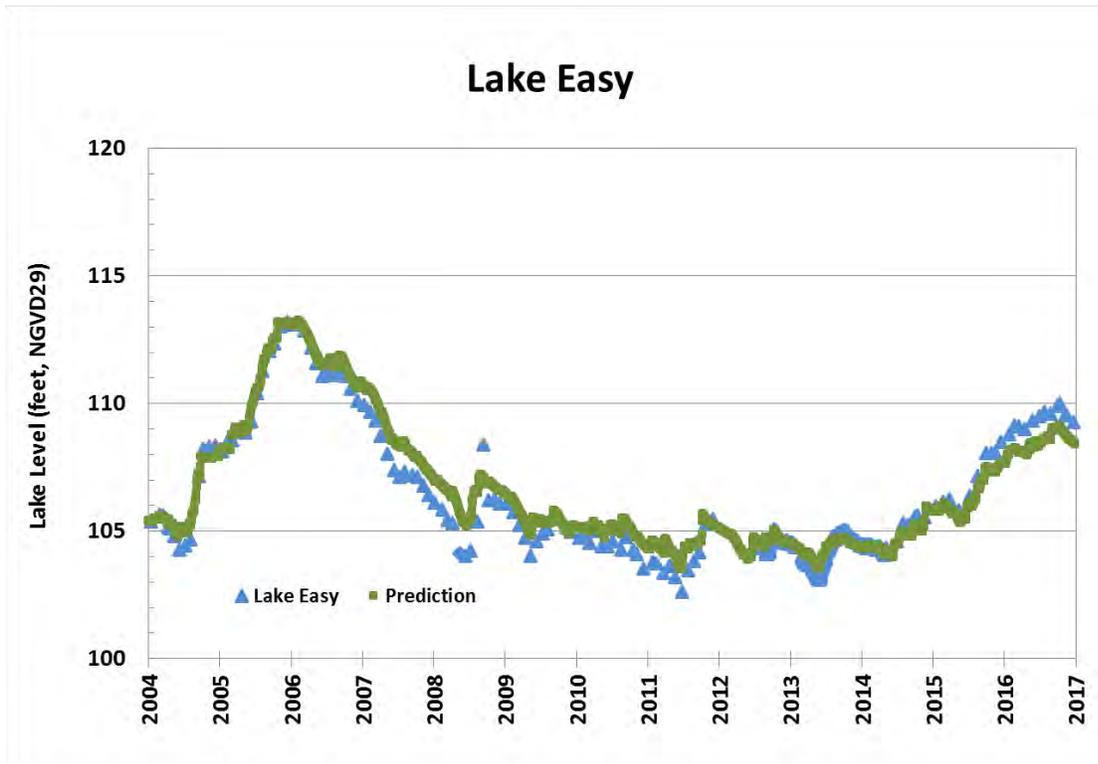
#### *Surficial Aquifer*

The RIDGE WRAP VC-3 surficial aquifer monitor well is the closest surficial aquifer well near the lake and is located approximately 0.25 miles south of Lake Easy (Figures 3 and 4). Due to the distance of the well to the lake, an offset of 3.4 ft was applied to the well data. This offset represents a hydraulic gradient from the well to the lake of 0.002, which is a reasonable gradient within this region. The offset was calculated by using LiDAR data to determine land surface for the RIDGE WRAP VC-3 well and additional wells within the vicinity as well as stage levels at the lake. Data collection at this well began in 1993. Linear infilling was used to infill missing data to create daily values needed for the water budget model from January 2004 through December 2016.

### **F. Water Budget Model Calibration**

The primary reason for the development of the water budget model was to estimate Historic lake stage exceedance percentiles that could be used to support development of Minimum and Guidance Levels for the lake. Model calibration was therefore focused on matching long-term percentiles based on measured water levels, rather than short-term high and low levels. Model calibration statistics that are reported are based on comparison of pairs of daily measured and modeled water levels.

Figure 15 presents the calibration results of the model. Table 3 presents a comparison of the percentiles of the measured data versus the model results. Table 4 presents the modeled water budget components for the calibration period.



**Figure 15. Modeled water levels predicted for the calibrated Lake Easy water budget (Predicted) and measured levels used for the model calibration (Data)**

**Table 3. Comparison of percentiles of measured lake level data compared to calibration percentiles from the model (all in feet NGVD29)**

	Data	Model
P10	105.8	105.9
P50	104.5	104.5
P90	103.7	104.0

**Table 4. Lake Easy Water Budget (2004-2016)**

Inflows		Surficial Aquifer Ground- water Inflow	Floridan Aquifer Ground- water Inflow		DCIA Runoff	Inflow via channel	Total
	Rainfall			Runoff			
In/yr	54.2	21.9	0.0	3.8	6.6	0.0	86.5
%	62.6	25.3	0.0	4.4	7.7	0.0	100.0
Outflows		Surficial Aquifer Ground- water Outflow	Floridan Aquifer Ground- water Outflow			Outflow via channel	Total
	Evap- oration						
In/yr	59.0	0.0	24.8			0.0	83.7
%	70.4	0.0	26.6			0.0	100.0

**G. Water Budget Model Calibration Discussion**

Based on visual inspection of Figure 15 the model appears to be reasonably well calibrated. There are a few periods when the peaks or lows in the modeled hydrograph are slightly higher or lower than the measured values, and these differences contributed to minor differences between the modeled and measured percentiles associated with the P10 and P90 percentiles. Data limitations in the extreme ranges of the topography/bathymetry used to develop stage-volume estimates may also have contributed to the percentile difference.

A review of Table 3 shows no differences in medians (P50) between the data and lake model. The difference in measured and water budget model predicted P10 and P90 percentiles are 0.1 and 0.3, respectively (with the model being higher than the data for both). The minor differences could be attributed to inaccuracies in rainfall estimates caused by the distance between rainfall gages and the lake during certain time periods or data collection frequency.

The water budget model results are presented in terms of inches per year over the average lake area for the period of the model run, which can be difficult to comprehend at first. For example, runoff for the entire watershed is applied to the smaller lake area, which makes the value appear high until the differences in application area are considered. Leakage rates (and leakance coefficients), as another example, represent conditions below the lake base only, and may not be representative of the entire watershed. Professional judgement and decisions were used to match the modeled

lake levels with observed data and arrive at the ultimate goal of developing a calibrated model. Even though data gaps as well as uncertainties in the values of model parameters have caused some differences between the model and observed data, the model is reasonably well calibrated and can be used to estimate the long term historic percentiles.

## **H. Water Budget Model Results**

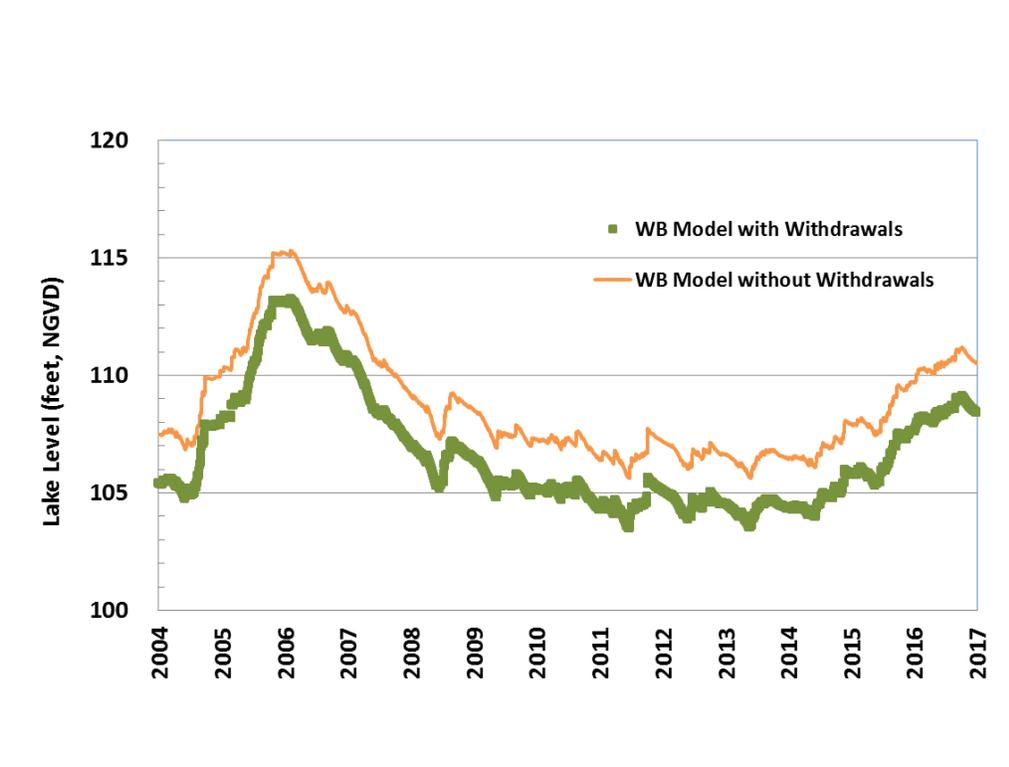
Groundwater withdrawals are not directly included in the Lake Easy water budget model, but are indirectly represented by their effects on water levels in the Upper Floridan aquifer. When a relationship between withdrawal rates and Upper Floridan aquifer potentiometric levels can be established, the effect of changes in groundwater withdrawals can be estimated by adjusting Upper Floridan aquifer levels in the model.

Determining the amount of Upper Floridan aquifer drawdown that has occurred due to groundwater withdrawals involved the use of a regional groundwater model and analysis of water level data. The East-Central Florida Transient (ECFT) groundwater model (Sepulveda, et al., 2012 and CFWI, 2014) was used to quantify changes in water levels in response to changes in groundwater withdrawals. This was accomplished using a series of model runs whereby recent withdrawals and irrigation amounts were reduced by 25 percent, 50 percent, and 75 percent. This approach enabled the model to be used within the range of withdrawals that were used during the calibration phase. For the reassessment of minimum levels, the reduced pumping scenarios used a reference condition as a basis for comparing model reduction scenarios. The reference condition was based on the amount of groundwater withdrawals needed to meet the demands for water that existed as of 2005. Pumping amounts for each year and month of the 12 year transient model run were varied according to rainfall that occurred during each month. Model scenario results show approximately 4.6 ft of Upper Floridan drawdown beneath Lake Easy.

Based on the results from the ECFT model and confirmation of the model to wells in the area, 4.6 feet of drawdown is added to the Upper Floridan aquifer water levels in the water budget model to represent zero drawdown conditions. This accounts for increases in pumping amounts that have occurred within one mile of the lake during and beyond the period used for the model. With respect to the surficial aquifer, the relationship between the Leakage coefficient and the ratio of surficial aquifer to Upper Florida aquifer drawdowns established for previous modeling efforts (SWFWMD, 1999) was used. From the water budget model, the Leakage coefficient was 0.00055 feet/day/feet which resulted in a ratio of surficial to Upper Florida drawdown of 0.35.

The resulting recovery in the surficial aquifer of 1.6 ft was estimated as the product of this ratio and the estimated 4.6 ft Upper Florida aquifer recovery amount.

Figure 16 presents the results of the calibrated water budget model for Lake Easy with and without the effects of groundwater withdrawals. Table 5 presents the percentiles based on the model output.



**Figure 16. Calibrated Water Budget Model for Lake Easy with and without the effects of withdrawals**

**Table 5. Historical lake level percentiles determined using the water budget model (feet NGVD29)**

Percentile	Elevation
P10	108.0
P50	106.6
P90	106.1

### J. Rainfall Regression Model

In an effort to extend the period of record of water levels used to determine the Historic percentiles to be used in the development of the Minimum Levels, a line of organic

correlation (LOC) was performed using the results of the water budget model with drawdown effects removed and long-term rainfall data. The LOC is a linear fitting procedure that minimizes errors in both the x and y directions and defines the best-fit straight line as the line that minimizes the sum of the areas of right triangles formed by horizontal and vertical lines extending from observations to the fitted line (Helsel and Hirsch, 2002). LOC is preferable for this application since it produces a result that best retains the variance (and therefore best retains the "character") of the original data. By using this technique, the limited years of calibrated water budget model water levels can be projected back to create a simulated data set representing over 60 years of lake levels, based on the relationship between modeled water levels and actual rainfall.

In this application, the simulated lake water levels representing Historic conditions were correlated with long-term rainfall data. For the rainfall regression analysis, additional representative rainfall records were added to the rainfall data used in the water budget model (2004-2016), extending the rainfall record back to 1946. The record consisted of an average of daily rainfall measurements from two rainfall gages. Missing daily data values were infilled from one of the two gages. All data from 1946 through 1994 were populated using these two gages. The gages used to build the Long-term rainfall series (Figure 17) were Mountain Lake NWS (SID 25147) and Babson Park ENE NWS rain gage (SID 25159). An average of NEXRAD pixels that overlain the lake watershed were averaged and used to represent rainfall from 1995 through 2016.

Rainfall data were correlated to lake water level data by applying a linear inverse weighted sum to the rainfall. The weighted sum gives higher weight to more recent rainfall and less weight to rainfall in the past. In this application, weighted sums varying from 6 months to 10 years were separately used, the results were compared, and the weighted rainfall series with the highest coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was chosen as the best model. For this assessment, the final 6-year weighted model had the highest coefficient of determination, with  $R^2$  of 0.89. The results are presented in Figure 18.

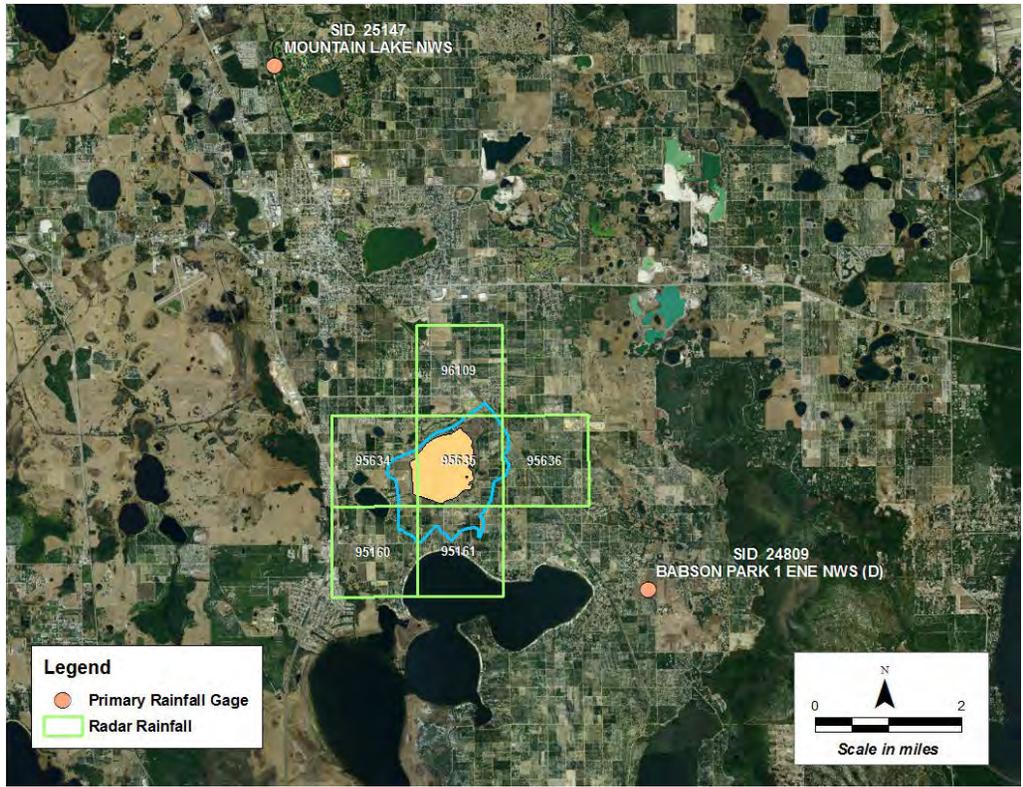


Figure 17. NEXRAD Pixels and Rainfall Gauges used for LOC Model

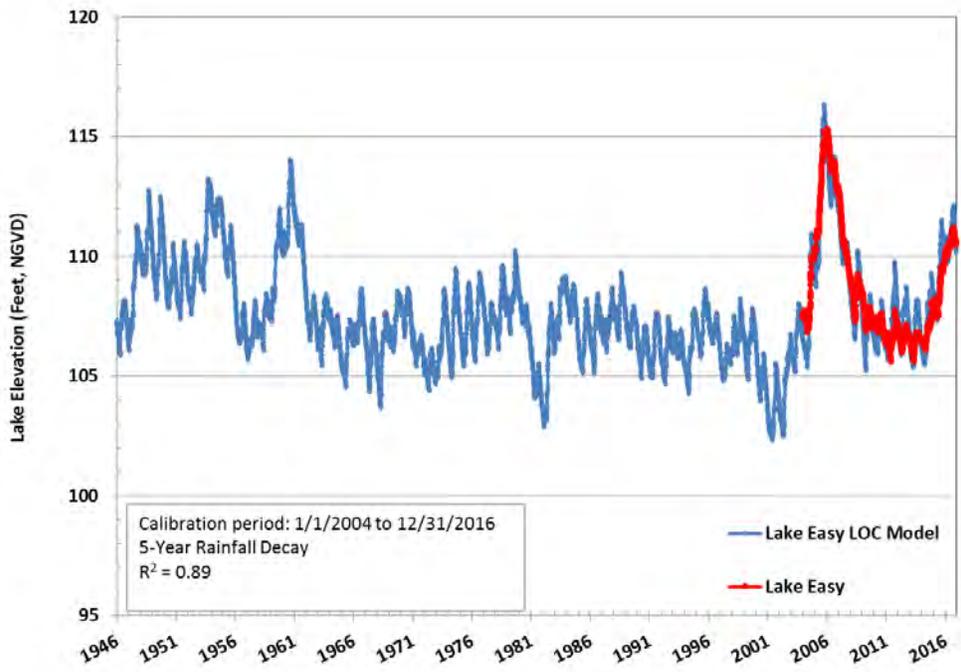


Figure 18. LOC model results for Lake Easy

To produce Historic percentiles that apply significant weight to the results of the water budget models, the rainfall LOC results for the period of the water budget model are replaced with the water budget model results. Therefore, the LOC rainfall model results are used for the period of 1946-2016, while the water budget results are used for the period of 2004-2016. These results are referred to as the “hybrid model.” The resulting Historic percentiles for the hybrid model are presented in Table 6. Note that the difference between the P10, P50, and P90 percentiles from the water budget model (Table 5) and those from the hybrid rainfall model (Table 6) for Lake Easy are 2.6, 0.7 for the P10, P50, respectively (with the hybrid model being higher) and 0.7 for the P90 with the water budget model being higher.

**Table 6. Historic percentiles as estimated using the hybrid model from 1946 to 2016 (feet NGVD 29).**

Percentile	Lake Easy
P10	110.6
P50	107.3
P90	105.4

## **J. Conclusions**

Based on the model results and the available data, the Lake Easy water budget and LOC rainfall models are useful tools for assessing long-term percentiles in the lake. Based on the same information, lake stage exceedance percentiles developed through use of the models appear to be reasonable estimates for Historic conditions.

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## **Appendix B**

### **Draft Technical Memorandum**

July 10, 2017

TO: Tamera McBride, P.G., Manager, Water Resources Bureau

FROM: Jason G. Patterson, Hydrogeologist, Water Resources Bureau  
Don Ellison, P.G., Senior Hydrogeologist, Water Resources Bureau  
Donna Campbell, Environmental Scientist, Water Resources Bureau

**Subject: Lake Easy Initial Minimum Levels Status Assessment**

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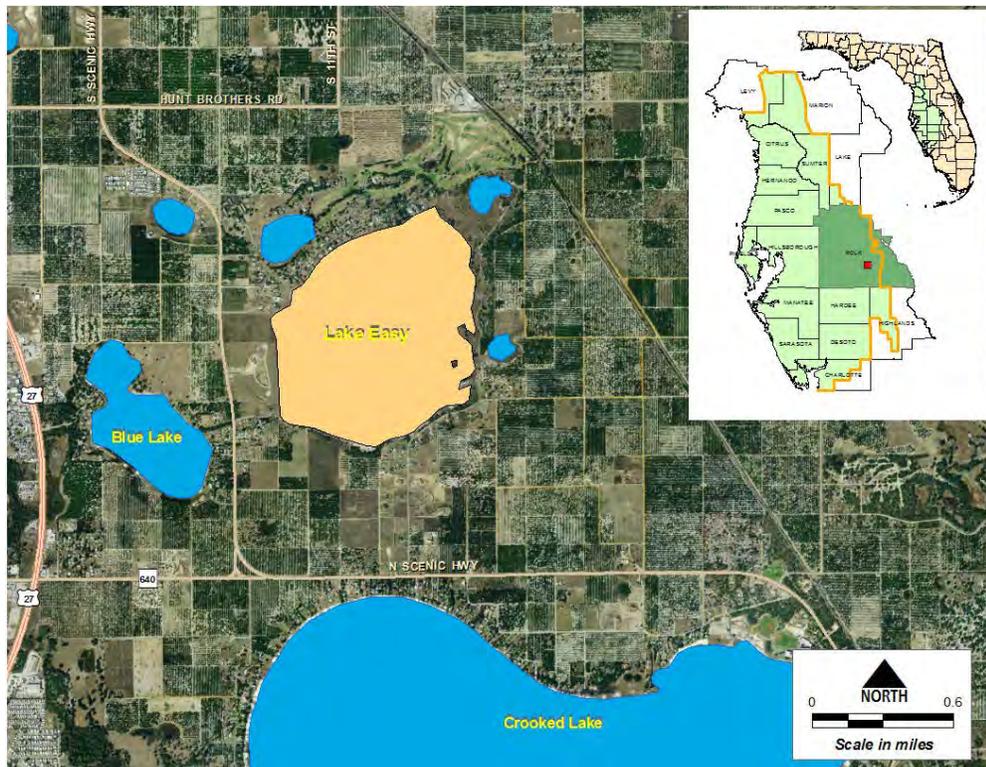
#### **A. Introduction**

The Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) is adopting minimum levels for Lake Easy in accordance with Section 373.042 and 373.0421, Florida Statutes (F.S). Documentation regarding development of the revised minimum levels is provided by Patterson and Ellison (2017) and Hurst and others (2017).

Section 373.0421, F.S. requires that a recovery or prevention strategy be developed for all water bodies that are found to be below their minimum flows or levels, or are projected to fall below the minimum flows or levels within 20 years. In the case of Lakes and other waterbodies with established minimum flows or levels in the Southern Water Use Caution Area (SWUCA), an applicable regional recovery strategy, referred to as the SWUCA Recovery Strategy, has been developed and adopted into District rules (Rule 40D-80.074, F.A.C.). One of the goals of the SWUCA Recovery Strategy is to achieve recovery of minimum flow and level water bodies such as Lake Easy. This document provides information and analyses to be considered for evaluating the status of the revised minimum levels proposed for Lake Easy and any recovery that may be necessary for the lake.

#### **B. Background**

Lake Easy is located in south-central Polk County, south of Hunt Brothers Rd and just east of S. Scenic HWY (Figure 1). The lake is within the Kissimmee watershed.



**Figure 1. Location of Lake Easy in Polk County, Florida**

### **C. Minimum Levels Proposed for Lake Easy**

Minimum levels proposed for Lake Easy are presented in Table 1 and discussed in more detail by Campbell and others (2017). Minimum levels represent long-term conditions that if achieved, are expected to protect water resources and the ecology of the area from significant harm that may result from water withdrawals. The Minimum Lake Level is the elevation that a lake's water levels are required to equal or exceed fifty percent of the time on a long-term basis. The High Minimum Lake Level is the elevation that a lake's water levels are required to equal or exceed ten percent of the time on a long-term basis. The Minimum Lake Level therefore represents the required 50th percentile (P50) of long-term water levels, while the High Minimum Lake Level represents the required 10<sup>th</sup> percentile (P10) of long-term water levels. To determine the status of minimum levels for Lake Easy or minimum flows and levels for any other water body, long-term data or model results must be used.

Table 1. Proposed Minimum Levels for Lake Easy.

<b>Proposed Minimum Levels</b>	<b>Elevation in Feet NGVD 29</b>
High Minimum Lake Level	109.8
Minimum Lake Level	106.5

#### **D. Status Assessment**

The lake status assessment approach involves using actual lake stage data for Lake Easy from 2004 through 2016, which was determined to represent the “Current” period. The Current period represents a recent “Long-term” period when hydrologic stresses (including groundwater withdrawals) and structural alterations are reasonably stable. For Lake Easy, collection of stage data at the lake began in October, 1992. No structural alterations have occurred at the lake and groundwater withdrawals during this period were relatively consistent as demonstrated by Patterson and Ellison (2017). Therefore, 2004 through 2016 are considered to represent the “Current” period. “Long-term” is defined as a period that has been subjected to the full range of rainfall variability that can be expected in the future. To create a data set that can reasonably be considered to be “Long-term”, a line of organic correlation (LOC) analysis was performed on the lake level data from the Current period. The LOC is a linear fitting procedure that minimizes errors in both the x and y directions and defines the best-fit straight line as the line that minimizes the sum of the areas of right triangles formed by horizontal and vertical lines extending from observations to the fitted line (Helsel and Hirsch, 2002). The LOC is preferable for this application since it produces a result that best retains the variance (and therefore best retains the "character") of the original data. This technique was used to develop the minimum levels for Lake Easy (Patterson and Ellison, 2017). By using this technique, the limited years of Current lake level data can be projected back to create a simulated data set representing over 60 years of lake levels, based on the current relationship between lake water levels and actual rainfall.

The same rainfall data set used for setting the minimum levels for Lake Easy was used for the status assessment. The best resulting correlation for the LOC model created with measured data was the 6-year weighted period (the best correlation for the LOC analyses created with Historic data to set the Lake Easy MFL was 5 years), with a coefficient of determination of 0.81. The resulting lake stage exceedance percentiles are presented in Table 2.

As an additional piece of information, Table 2 also presents the same percentiles calculated directly from the measured lake level data for Lake Easy for the period from 2004 through 2016. A limitation of these values is that the resulting lake stage

exceedance percentiles are representative of rainfall conditions during only the past 13 years, rather than the longer-term rainfall conditions represented in the 1946 through 2016 LOC model simulations.

Table 2. Comparison of lake stage exceedance percentiles derived from the lake stage/LOC results, exceedance percentiles of the 2004 through 2016 data, and the revised minimum levels proposed for Lake Easy.

<b>Percentile</b>	<b>Lake Stage/LOC Model Current Withdrawal Scenario Results</b> Elevation in feet NGVD 29	<b>2004 through 2016 Data</b> Elevation in feet NGVD 29	<b>Proposed Minimum Levels</b> Elevation in feet NGVD 29
P10	108.0	110.5	109.8
P50	104.8	105.6	106.5

A comparison of the LOC model with the minimum levels proposed for Lake Easy indicates that the Long-term P10 is 1.8 feet below the proposed High Minimum Lake Level, and the Long-term P50 is 1.7 feet lower than the proposed Minimum Lake Level. The P10 elevation derived directly from the 2004 through 2016 lake data is 0.7 feet above the proposed High Minimum Lake Level and the P50 elevation is 0.9 feet below the proposed Minimum Lake Level. Differences in rainfall between the shorter 2004 through 2016 period and the longer 1946 to 2015 period used for the LOC modeling analyses likely contribute to the differences between derived and measured lake stage exceedance percentiles. Additionally, differences between actual withdrawal rates and those used in the models may have contributed to some of the differences in the percentiles.

## **E. Conclusions**

Based on the information presented in this memorandum, it is concluded that Lake Easy water levels are currently below the Minimum Lake Level and the High Minimum Lake Level proposed for the lake. These conclusions are supported by comparison of percentiles derived from LOC modeled lake stage data with the proposed minimum levels.

Minimum flow and level status assessments are completed on an annual basis by the District and on a five-year basis as part of the regional water supply planning process.

## **F. References**

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