

Organizational Information

Name of Organization

WWALS Watershed Coalition, Inc.

Contact Name and Title

John S. Quarterman, Vice President

Address, Phone, Email, Website

3338 Country Club Road #L336, Valdosta, GA 31605
229-242-0102, wwalswatershed@gmail.com, www.wwals.net

Organization Mission

WWALS is an advocacy organization working for watershed conservation of the Willacoochee, Withlacoochee, Alapaha, and Little River Systems watershed in south Georgia and north Florida through awareness, environmental monitoring, and citizen advocacy.

Organization Annual Budget

\$2,000

Federal Tax ID Number

46-2656118

Number of Paid Staff / Number of Board Members (attach a list of board members and staff)

No paid staff.

Nine board members: Al Browning, Garry Gentry (Membership), Chris Graham, Dave Hetzel (President), April Huntley, Gretchen Quarterman (Treasurer), John S. Quarterman (VP), Karan A. Rawlins (Events), Bret Wagenhorst (Recording Secretary and Outings).

Title of Project and Requested Amount

Implement regional Water Trails on the Alapaha and Withlacoochee Rivers, tying into a new boat ramp and Alapaha River Park (ARP) in Lowndes County.
\$2,000

Grant Request Summary (No more than 100 words)

After previous WWALS lobbying, the Lowndes County Commission (LCC) and voters authorized SPLOST funding of a boat ramp and park on the Alapaha River. WWALS will assist with implementation, plus tying that park into Water Trails on the Alapaha and Withlacoochee Rivers and their tributaries, through regional outreach, marketing, education, and participation in surrounding counties (Brooks, Colquitt, Cook, Tift, Turner, Ben Hill, Irwin, Berrien, Lanier, and Echols in Georgia and Hamilton and Madison in Florida), coordinating with the Valdosta-Lowndes County Parks and Recreation Authority (VLPRA) and similar agencies, local governments, NGOs, and citizens, tying into existing Water Trails in Florida.

Seed Grant Project Need and Description (No more than 1000 words)

Describe the organizational need(s) and/or watershed need(s) the project will address.

The only public access to the Alapaha River in Lowndes County was closed by the Lowndes County Commission.

Another VLPRA park and boat ramp (at Knights Ferry Road) was misused (park benches and fences destroyed, target shooting).

The 2009 flood was called a 700 year flood, but an initial U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) study characterized it as a 35 year flood, and those of 2013 as 15 year floods. USACE proposes a multi-year watershed-wide flooding study. Citizen engagement with our rivers and watersheds is needed to help find and ameliorate the causes of flooding and other watershed problems.

The region has a chronic job shortage for younger people.

Naylor petition for Alapaha access fails: County abandons road in spite of 330 concerned citizens, by Jason Schaefer, Valdosta Daily Times, 27 February 2013, <http://www.valdostadailytimes.com/todays-top-stories/x36431363/Naylor-petition-for-Alapaha-access-fails>

Alapaha River Park? Letter from WWALS to the Lowndes County Commission, 18 February 2013: <http://www.wwals.net/?p=296>

“A park would simplify maintaining the 100 foot natural vegetative buffer required by the state in a Protected River Corridor,” said Dave Hetzel, WWALS President. “It could even reduce potential liability to the county from stranded boaters coming downstream from Lanier County, by giving them easy access to the shore for their safety,” said Karan Rawlins, WWALS Board Member. It would conserve the wooded Alapaha River that has been featured in literature about the county for fifty years or more now. “And that would help water quality in the river,” said Al Browning, WWALS Board Member.

Such a park, especially as part of a multi-river park system, would be attractive to new and old businesses and their employees. “That would be a boon to the local economy,” said Garry Gentry, WWALS Board Member. “I believe we had nearly 15 people from as far away as Tifton on a canoe and kayak trip to that landing in 2009,” said Bret Wagenhorst, WWALS board member. The Valdosta Metropolitan Statistical Area could use a riparian park system worthy of a major MSA. Perhaps Lanier County would like to participate, as well, with a park on the other side of the Alapaha River.

County setting parks legacy, by April Huntley, Valdosta Daily Times, 28 July 2013, <http://www.l-a-k-e.org/blog/?p=4948>

...the Lowndes County Board of Commissioners has announced their “Consideration of Proposed List” for Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax VII on July 22-23, 2013....

I would also like to send out a big thank you to the commissioners for putting a Community Center in Naylor and a boat ramp on the Alapaha River as part of the purpose for the Parks and Recreation allocation.

Lowndes County needs public access to the beautiful Alapaha River as residents have enjoyed the river for generations. I hope the community will come together over this project and create a legacy for generations to come....

Flood-tracking chart for the Withlacoochee and Little River Basins in south-central Georgia and northern Florida, 2014, Gotvald, Anthony J.; McCallum, Brian E.; Painter, Jaime A. USGS General Information Product: 155, <http://pubs.er.usgs.gov/publication/gip155>

Videos of initial USACE flooding study: <http://www.l-a-k-e.org/blog/?p=8821>

USDA says landowners need “to reduce the flow of sediment, nutrients and other runoff into impaired waterways.” U.S. EPA and GA EPD list numerous 303(d) impaired streams within all WWALS watersheds. Local governments alone cannot adequately address these problems, because our watersheds cross many local boundaries. Mutual engagement through the Water Trails project could help.

Describe the project and how it will address the need(s). What results and impact will be achieved and how will they be measured? What components can be utilized by other organizations and/or duplicated in other watersheds? How will this funding fill a gap where other funding isn’t available? How will the project help your organization progress?

A completed Alapaha River Park will reimplement a Lowndes boating stop at a reasonable day outing distance between Lanier and Echols Counties, while providing local recreation. WWALS will assist in tuning park facilities to local and river needs, plus organizing citizen monitoring of the park to prevent abuse. LCC and VLPRA have requested engagement of citizens near the park; the same citizens who approached WWALS about the road closing that led to the need for a new park. Two of them are now WWALS board members.

Park implementation will be measured by a public opening announcement.

Tying the park into a system of Water Trails on the Alapaha River will promote recreation, community, and regional quality of life, which in turn should help attract businesses that value such quality, improving the regional economy. Brown's Guide to Georgia says:

“Jungle-like in its remoteness and luxurious with exotic vegetation, the dark reddish-brown waters of the Alapaha wind through a swampy wonderland teeming with wildlife.”

The same population centers in Lowndes, Tift, and Berrien Counties serve another river:

“A list of Georgia's truly beautiful scenic rivers includes the Withlacoochee.... its dark waters flow south along the Cook County line into Lowndes County, where it is joined by its largest tributary, (ironically) the Little River. Intimate, shaded in its northern reaches) mysterious in its beauty—... limestone ledges form small shoals. ...the occasional white sandbar on the insides of bends, which are perfect for swimming or camping.”

VLPRA has requested regional assistance for Water Trails on both rivers. Both rivers flow into the Suwannee River in Florida, and Florida's Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) handles the Water Trails on both rivers in Florida.

Results will be measured by completed plans for Water Trail sections, and by public opening announcements of such sections.

Followon results will be measured by reports on invasive and native species, riparian buffers, and counts of uses of the park and Water Trails.

Describe why the project is a current organizational priority.

This project assists WWALS in cultivating communications with local governments, other organizations, and the public. Conversations have already commenced between WWALS and LCC, Valdosta City Council (VCC), VLPRA, the South Georgia Regional Commission, the Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Council, Seven Rivers Resource Conservation and Development Council, Georgia EPD, and USACE.

This project is a natural followon to WWALS' previous two letters to LCC about Alapaha River access, research on relevant laws and ordinances, organizing people to attend government sessions, and helping find park land, now scaling up to regional Water Trails, including the innovative reporting of invasive and native species through the SEEDN smartphone app and hashtags, which can be utilized by other organizations and duplicated in other watersheds.

Outputs (may be bulleted)

Recommendations for park facilities (boatramp, benches, sanitary facilities, parking, wildlife cameras, etc.).

Organization of citizen park monitoring.

Public announcements of completed Alapaha River Park.

Outings on the rivers to identify Water Trail features

On-land meetings to discuss the Water Trails, including presentations by related organizations and individuals.

Discussions with and presentations to related people and organizations, including governmental, for example the military community at Moody Air Force Base and the students at Valdosta State University, Wiregrass Tech, ABAC, and other large regional and local universities and colleges.

Recommendations for Water Trail features, including locations of notable invasive species, native species, wild areas, encroachments by agriculture, roads, pipelines, or development, history, archaeology, geology, and previous water level and quality measurements.

Concrete agreements with or among relevant organizations about Water Trails.

Public announcements of completed Water Trail sections.

Hashtag picture reports from landmarks specified on the Water Trails.

SEEDN reports from the Water Trails recorded in bugwood.org's EDDMapS database.

Timeline

Include a brief timeline for your project plan, highlighting major milestones and tasks to be accomplished including expected completion dates.

All dates are proposed, and may change in communication with other organizations, especially VLPRA and LCC, and with river water levels.

June 2014: Draft plan for Alapaha Water Trail south section (AlapahaSWT): Alapaha River from Lakeland (Lanier County), to site of Hotchkiss bridge (Lanier County), to the new park at US84 in Lowndes County, to Statenville (Echols County), connecting to the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail (SRWT) near Jennings, Hamilton County, Florida, including identifying landowners, likely trail users, and affected organizations. With side trips for Grand Bay Wetlands Management Area (Lowndes County) and Banks Lake (Berrien County).

July 2014: park facilities and Water Trail meeting in Naylor, Lowndes County, GA.

July 2014: form Water Trails advisory committee; contact more stakeholders.

August 2014: outing on Alapaha River from proposed site, and inventory along AlapahaSWT of invasive and native species, water level and quality issues, geology, etc.

September 2014: park facilities recommendations completed.

September 2014: Revised plan for AlapahaSWT including water level records and seasonal boating recommendations, water quality records and ongoing measurement recommendations, major invasive species sites and tips on recording spread, etc.

October 2014: Draft brochures for AlapahaSWT.

November 2014: Organizational meeting for AlapahaSWT.

February 2015: Final brochures for AlapahaSWT, and draft map, guide, website, and signs.

March 2015: Park and Water Trail conference, emphasizing organizing for ongoing upkeep, outreach, and expansion after establishment.

Spring 2015: Alapaha River Park at US84 completed (this date depends greatly on LCC and VLPRA).

May 2015: AlapahaSWT established, with brochures, map, guide, website, sign, and at least one wayside exhibit at Alapaha River Park.

Other Water Trails sections, as many as possible during the grant period, with others following as resources are available. See *Streamer on the Alapaha and Withlacoochee Rivers* <http://www.wwals.net/?p=779>.

WithlacoocheeWT: Withlacoochee River, at GA 37 in Cook and Berrien Counties, then in Lowndes and Brooks Counties at GA 122, Franklinville Road, (try to get access at Skipper Bridge Road), (try to improve access at Staten Road Bridge), Langdale Park near North Valdosta Road (VLPRA boat ramp), Withlacoochee River Wastewater Treatment Plant, US 84, Old Quitman Road (Brooks County) Knights Ferry Road (VLPRA), Clyattville-Nankin Road (VLPRA), GA 31 (VLPRA), connecting to SRWT near Pinetta, in Madison County, Florida. WithlacoocheeWT should be the quickest to establish, since most of the existing landings are maintained by VLPRA. Some new intermediate landings and facilities would be useful, and explore possibilities farther upstream such as at GA 76 near Nashville, Berrien County seat. See also *Withlacoochee River from Nankin Landing to GA 31: WWALS June Outing* <http://www.wwals.net/2013/06/22/withlacoochee-river-from-nankin-landing-to-ga-31-wwals-june-outing-2/>, *Flooding charts* <http://www.wwals.net/2014/05/06/flooding-charts-2/>, a trip report, <http://www.paddling.net/places/showReport.html?1651>, and Brown's *Withlacoochee River Paddling Guide*

<http://www.brownsguides.com/blog/withlacochee-river-paddling-guide/>.

LittleWT: Little River (tributary of Withlacochee) in Colquitt, Echols, Brooks, and Lowndes Counties: Red Roberts Landing (Echols County) at Reed Bingham State Park, GA 37 (Colquitt County), Brooks County Road 277 or Antioch Road or Cook County Road 250, GA 76 (Brooks and Cook Counties), GA 122 (Brooks and Lowndes Counties), Lawson Mill Pond Road or Morven Road (Brooks and Lowndes), GA 133 (Brooks and Lowndes), connecting to WithlacocheeWT. See pictures of WWALS 29 March 2014 BIG Little River Paddle Event at Reed Bingham State Park: <http://www.wwals.net/?p=1513>, <http://www.wwals.net/?p=1441>, <http://www.wwals.net/?p=1430>.

AlapahaNWT: Alapaha River north section, from Alapaha (Berrien County), past Willacochee (Atkinson County), to Lakeland, connecting to AlapahaSWT. Include notes on side trip to Lewis Lake (Avera's Mill Pond), rookery for a dozen water bird species, on Ten Mile Creek near Nashville in Berrien County. See *Outing at Avera's Mill Pond (Lewis Lake)* <http://www.wwals.net/?p=1663>.

WillacocheeWT: Willacochee River in Berrien, Atkinson, Coffee, Irwin, and Ben Hill Counties, connecting to AlapahaNWT. This will involve exploration, since no one seems sure how much of the Willacochee is boatable, and there are few put-ins.

AlapahoocheeWT: Alapahoochee River (Lowndes County, GA and Hamilton County, FL), connecting to AlapahaSWT.

NewWT: New River, which is the rest of the border between Cook and Berrien Counties and starts near Tifton in Tift County, connecting to WithlacocheeWT. This would be exploration.

OkapilcoWT: Okapilco Creek, which comes all the way from Moultrie in Colquitt County, through Brooks County, connecting to WithlacocheeWT. This would be exploration.

Budget Request

Please attach a project budget and organizational budget for the fiscal year of implementation of this project. Please include the source and amount of any additional funding sources (received and pending), including in-kind funding, in the project budget. If your budget includes lobbying, please break down the anticipated lobbying expenses. Please note that the Georgia River Network and Turner Foundation encourage and support advocacy as long as the organization is following the code set forth by the IRS.

\$500 wildlife cameras (10) for park and trail monitoring

\$500 Training workshops and conferences

\$500 Project marketing (brochures, maps, guides, branded water bottles, cards, etc.)

\$500 misc. such as signs where county governments won't provide

\$2,000 total

Funds may shift among the above categories, because determining for example how many signs, of what type, where, and who will pay for them (local governments, the state, WWALS, etc.) is part of the work of the project.

All of the above are part of lobbying local, regional, state, and national government and other groups and citizens about the park, Water Trails, and related issues.

No additional funding known at this time, although seeking additional funding sources will be part of the

project, including looking for in-kind matching from governmental agencies.

Previous Grants

Applicants that have received previous funding through this program must have completed all previously funded work and turned in required reports in a timely manner. If you have not completed previously funded work please provide an outline of when and how the work will be completed or explanation of why it cannot be completed.

None.

Strategic Plan or Annual Plan of Work

Every year WWALS holds monthly outings (weather permitting) on rivers or lakes, quarterly seminars or other events, and monthly board meetings, approximately every other one with a speaker, plus letters to governmental or other bodies on relevant topics as needed. The present project proposal dovetails with that traditional WWALS annual plan of work.

In January 2014 the WWALS board adopted nine goals for 2014, of which these five are addressed by the present project proposal:

G.2. Outreach to schools to teach students about watershed health and science

G.3. Do invasive species monitoring and water quality monitoring on all WWALS outings.

G.4. Water quality certification for as many people & members as possible & partner with Adopt-a-Stream

G.5. Map encroachment, water quality, invasive species, pesticide run off and share info

G.7. Get WWALS involved in watershed mapping of floodplains by Army Corps of Engineers in our watershed areas