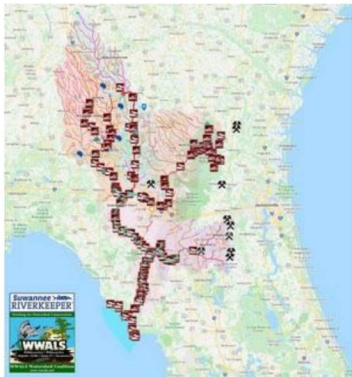
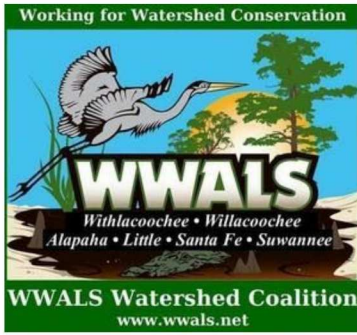


August 2, 2020



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WWALS is an IRS 501(c)(3)
nonprofit charity est. June 2012

WWALS Watershed Coalition advocates for conservation and stewardship of the Withlacoochee, Willacoochee, Alapaha, Little, Santa Fe, and Suwannee River watersheds in south Georgia and north Florida through education, awareness, environmental monitoring, and citizen activities.

Suwannee RIVERKEEPER® is a program and a paid staff position of WWALS.



To: Potential Partners in helping clean up the Withlacoochee River

Re: **Current Situation of Water Quality Testing, Suwannee River Basin**

Dear Potential Partner,

Trudy Cole wrote about water quality testing for WWALS:

"We do this so not just our grandchildren, but your grandchildren have clean water to drink, fish, and swim in.

"Clean water, it's not just important, it is vital."

We've never found anyone who wants to swim, boat, or fish in dirty water, much less drink it.

One of the main ways to determine whether water is safe for these activities is to measure fecal bacteria that are derived from human and animal waste. They are indicators that contact with the water may cause a variety of diseases. There are well-established regulatory limits on these bacteria (see Attachment C: What do these numbers mean?) Far too often Withlacoochee River water exceeds these limits for safe drinking, swimming, or fishing. Such contamination threatens public health and limits use of the river and may affect nearby water wells.



Photo: Trudy Cole, of Conn and Trudy Cole testing water for WWALS, May 4, 2020

The Withlacoochee River is one of the main tributaries of the Suwannee River. It and its largest tributary the Little River, originate in the flatlands of Southern Georgia, meet just west of Valdosta. The Withlacoochee joins the Suwannee in North Florida. The River's geology includes many high magnitude fresh water springs. The springs and the river itself are magnets for swimming and boating. The underground water that feeds the springs interchanges with river water, and also supplies water for many private wells. Thus bacterial contamination of the river and its springs is a major regional concern.

Raw sewage spills have been a problem for many years, with the biggest ones coming from the City of Valdosta, as recently as December 2019. Yet that is not the only source. One recent contamination episode that did not come from Valdosta went all the way down the Withlacoochee and Suwannee Rivers to the Gulf of Mexico. The good news is that because of much recent testing, we have a much better idea of when our rivers are clean or not and how to identify contamination sources.

