



CITY of VALDOSTA, GEORGIA

Scott James Matheson

Mayor

June 30, 2021

Ms. Elizabeth Booth
Georgia Environmental Protection Division
Watershed Protection Branch
Watershed Planning & Monitoring Program
Suite 1152 East, 2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive
Atlanta, GA 30334

SUBJECT: GEORGIA TRIENNIAL REVIEW OF WATER QUALITY STANDARDS

Dear Ms. Booth:

It was recently brought to our attention that WWALS Watershed Coalition has requested an upgrade from fishing to recreational for the Georgia Environmental Protection Division's designated use of the Alapaha River, the Little River, and the Withlacoochee River as well as the Grand Bay Wildlife Management Area. This Recreational designation would set higher water quality standards for these bodies of water and the City of Valdosta is in favor of that designation. These rivers provide the public opportunities for canoeing, boating, overnight camping, fishing, swimming, wildlife observation, photography, and education. They also boast many waterfalls along their banks, some mild rapids, and two out of the six second magnitude springs in the State of Georgia.

On April 5, 2018, the City of Valdosta passed a Resolution in support of the Withlacoochee and Little River Water Trail organized by WWALS. On January 20, 2020, WWALS organized the very first "Mayor's Paddle" from the Troupville boat ramp to Spook Bridge where dozens of participants paddled the 11-mile stretch. I spoke with river enthusiasts over the five hours on the river and together with Bill Slaughter (the Lowndes County Commission Chair), we pledged our commitment to keeping our area waterways clean for all to enjoy. On March 27, 2021 we embarked on the 2nd annual "Mayor's Paddle" over that same 11-mile stretch and were proud to again speak to the over 50 participants at this year's paddle. Only one year removed, we were able to update the group on 36 additional manhole rehabs in the City and the completion of a 7.25 million gallon catch basin that we engineered in support of the brand new Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant. We also updated the crowd on having passed the \$100,000,000.00 mark on infrastructure improvements since 2017.

The City, County, and WWALS have organized and executed numerous river cleanups over the last few years and are currently working on a very exciting 'River Camp' project centered around the Troupville boat ramp off of Highway 133. We are well down the road with planning, organizing, and fundraising a land purchase that would allow us to construct nature trails, a river camp structure, hammock camps, an observation platform, and an outfitter to enable many more area residents to enjoy this beautiful stretch of river.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input toward this decision, and if you have any further questions, I would welcome the call on my cell phone (229) 561-7547 or work phone (229) 259-3500.

Sincerely,

Scott James Matheson
Mayor

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