

hardly ever have a sewage spill anymore, and now we're working on eliminating trash from the river. We remain committed to preventing any issues that may impact our Withlacoochee River. I invite everyone to come out and join us for a day of fellowship on the river."

"Come on down to where I used to fish as a child, and with my children," said Lowndes County Chairman Bill Slaughter. "I've spoken at this paddle every year, and this year I hope you will paddle."

"Welcome to this one of our many paddles," said WWALS Executive Director Gretchen Quarterman. "We have at least one daytime river paddle a month, in Florida or Georgia, plus an evening Full Moon paddle at Banks Lake, near Lakeland, GA. We'll be testing temperatures with an infrared thermometer as people arrive. If you're ill in any way, please stay home."

Come as early as 8 AM, Saturday, February 19, 2022, to Troupville Boat Ramp, drop off your boats, and drive to Spook Bridge. Two 15-seat vans provided by the Boys & Girls Club will shuttle you back to Troupville. This will be an outside event, but riders taking advantage of the shuttle service, please wear a mask.

"I will be recording 360-degree views to go on Earthviews, where everyone can see them," added Bobby McKenzie. "And if the water is too high, or the weather will be bad, don't worry, we'll reschedule, as we did last year."

"Yes, this time I told the Mayor he had to share, so it's the Mayor and Chairman's Paddle, meaning the Chairman of the Lowndes County Commission," added Suwannee Riverkeeper John S. Quarterman. "All elected officials present, from both Florida and Georgia, will have three minutes each to speak, both at the put-in and at the midway point. Don't worry: only a few of them will. But you can paddle up to them and ask questions. Just remember to stay six feet apart. Wear a mask if you get any closer to anybody not in your party, either on land or water."

Take a look at the signs by the boat ramp for the WWALS Withlacoochee and Little River Water Trail. They show the whole trail and what you can expect to see near Troupville Boat Ramp.

The paddle starts at the site of historic Troupville, the Lowndes County seat before Valdosta. The entrance road is the old north-south Broad Street of Troupville, which continues into the woods. That greatly simplifies planning for the future Troupville River Park. Paddling a few thousand feet, we come to the Little River Confluence with the Withlacoochee, with its view of rivers in three directions. The Confluence is in the private Land Between the Rivers (LBTR), now with a conservation easement and in negotiations for sale to Valdosta or Lowndes County to become part of Troupville River Nature Park. Just upstream on the Withlacoochee is the future site of a paddle boat take-out for Troupville River Camp, with screened-in sleeping platforms and bathrooms with hot and cold running water and air conditioning. Paddle on down the Withlacoochee River and see the turtles, birds, fish, and cypress and pine trees.

The clean water outfall from Valdosta's Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) makes an impressive waterfall. Valdosta now tests three times a week on forty river miles from US 41 to the state line, which is one big way we know the river is clean from *E. coli* most of the time, along with twice-weekly downstream testing by Madison Health in Florida, and tests by WWALS, plus occasional bacterial tests and DNA marker and chemical tracer data from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. WWALS will also test the water quality from the river the Thursday before the paddle, as we do every Thursday, with results published Friday. See <https://wwals.net/issues/testing/>

We will pass the site of an old railroad bridge, several creeks, and the notorious Sabal Trail methane pipeline. Stay left at County Line Shoals, just upstream from US 84. Just below US 84 is the CSX railroad bridge, and around the last bend is Spook Bridge, so famous it has its own movie. We take out on the left bank just below the bridge.

**When:** Gather 8 AM, launch 10 AM, end 4 PM, Saturday, February 19, 2022.

**Put-In:** [Troupville Boat Ramp](#), 19664 Valdosta Highway, Valdosta, GA 31602: on GA 133 off I-75 exit 18 in Lowndes County.

**Directions:** Head west from Valdosta on GA 133 (St. Augustine Road), cross I-75 and the Withlacoochee River, and at the light for Val Tech Road turn left into the VLPRA park around Troupville Boat Ramp.

**GPS:** [30.851842, -83.346536](#)