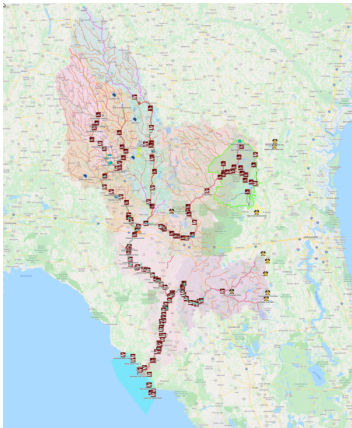
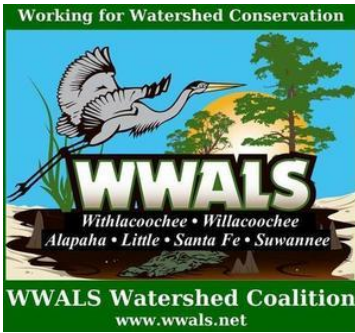


January 23, 2023



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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: Lowndes County Commission and Staff

Re: **REZ-2022-20 for a Dollar General, GA 122 @ Skipper Bridge Road**

Please deny the proposed rezoning at GA 122 and Skipper Bridge Road from Estate Agriculture to Crossroads Commercial.

We don't need more clearcutting, impervious surface, petroleum runoff, and trash, uphill from the Withlacoochee River, setting a precedent for further sprawl into a forestry and agricultural area, costing the county money, and everybody downstream as well.

This rezoning decision affects the entire county and everybody downstream all the way into Florida, for drinking water, flood prevention, wildlife, river water quality, and quality of life.

The applicants' site plan shows wetlands, which in heavy rains drain to road ditches that drain south under GA 122 and then east under Skipper Bridge Road into Poley Branch, then into the Withlacoochee River, then downstream, with styrofoam breaking up into pieces eaten by wildlife that cannot digest it.



The county litter crew is doing great work cleaning up litter at river access sites. But trash from the rezoning site and tossed by customers would reach the river on the other side and well downstream from Hagan Bridge Landing.

The 2009 and 2013 "700-year" floods that closed the Hutchinson Mill Creek Skipper Bridge Road bridge and many others throughout the county were not caused by record rains, rather by too much clearcutting and impervious surface. Clearcutting for a store and impervious surface for a parking lot would cause more runoff and flooding.

All [the letters received by the county](#) on this subject [as of Friday](#) are opposed, and as of this morning 180 people had signed [a petition against the rezoning](#).

Opponents include concern that the other 112 acres of that property would next want to be developed, followed by more. That is [what happened on Val Del Road](#), when the county extended water and sewer lines for Nelson Hill back in 2007. Val Del sprawl now reaches almost all the way north to GA 122. Skipper Bridge Road, much closer to

the Withlacoochee River, should not end up like that.

Sprawl far from existing services costs more in sending school buses, Sheriff deputies, and the county fire department, than the county can recover through property taxes. This was the conclusion of a study the county paid for in 2007: [The Local Government Fiscal Impacts of Land Use in Lowndes County: Revenue and Expenditure Streams by Land Use Category](#), Jeffrey H. Dorfman, Ph.D., Dorfman Consulting, December 2007. As Dr. Dorfman summarized in [a different presentation](#), “*Local governments must ensure balanced growth, as sprawling residential growth is a certain ticket to fiscal ruin\* \* Or at least big tax increases.*”

While this rezoning would be a problem with any commercial applicant, this application is sloppy. For example, they don't seem to know where Dollar General already has stores. The [rezoning plat](#) has Skipper Bridge Road labeled as “STATE ROUTE 122” and its title bar says “NORTHEAST INTERSECTION OF US HIGHWAY 19 AND HIGHWAY 202”. That intersection is [north of Thomasville](#). The [table of distances](#) to existing Dollar Generals does not include the one in Ray City, 8.5 road miles away, closer than the ones listed on Bemiss Road and Old US 41 N. The table lists one at 7920 Bemiss Road, which is the corner of New Bethel Road in Barretts, but there is no Dollar General there. Maybe they confused that address with 7290 Bemiss Road at Walkers Crossing (GA 125 @ GA 122), which is 6.7 miles away, closer than all of them except the one in Hahira.

The [Site Plan Aerial](#) shows part of the parking lot and the store on wetlands. It also shows a retention pond. But the [agenda sheet](#) says: “*It should be noted that, unless required by a condition of approval, the site plan is not binding and has not been approved by Lowndes County.*” Instead of just trusting the applicant, it would be better to trust the citizens of Lowndes County who do not want this rezoning.

Planning Commissioner Franklin Bailey, [whom the county just reappointed](#), said [back in 2013 about the Hahira Dollar General](#) rezoning, which also did not have water management details nor a site plan finalized, “*There's just a lot here we don't have.*” The Planning Commission voted unanimously to recommend approving that one, after nobody spoke against. But after many people spoke against the current rezoning, GLPC voted 7:1 to recommend denying this one, with Franklin Bailey voting for the motion. We don't need more Dollar Generals in the north of Lowndes County.

Please deny the rezoning to preserve agriculture, forestry, rural lifestyles, hunting, fishing, wetlands, the Withlacoochee River, our drinking water, and the county's tax base.

For the rivers and the aquifer,  
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