

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** *When it's finished, which it isn't yet.*

## **Fourth Annual Mayor and Chairman's Paddle, Withlacoochee River**

**Valdosta, Georgia, January 30, 2021** — Join us March 4th for this annual eleven-mile river paddle, past the future site of Troupville River Camp and Nature Park, along the west side of the most populous city in the Suwannee River Basin, past Valdosta's clean outfall of its Withlacoochee Wastewater Treatment Plant, with many creeks, oaks, cypresses, pines, fish, turtles, and maybe an alligator, down to Spook Bridge, so scary it has its own movie.

"Come on down to where I used to fish as a child, and with my children!" said Lowndes County Chairman Bill Slaughter. "This event allows our residents to come out and explore the natural beauties of Lowndes County while enjoying our waterways."

"I am excited to partner once again with WWALS, plus this time with Lowndes County, to show people our fabulous blackwater rivers, only a few miles from City Hall and VSU," said Valdosta Mayor Scott James. "After the largest infrastructure project and single largest financial commitment in the history of our City was made toward a completely modern sewer system, we are now exploring the next phase toward beautifying our area waterways. Council and City staff will be addressing the most cost effective way to educate our citizens and eliminate the trash littering our streets that eventually makes into our creeks and rivers. The fight will begin with further education of our friends and neighbors combined with additional focus from City staff and volunteers. I invite everyone to come out and join us for a day of fellowship on the river!"

"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. If you're ill in any way, please stay home."



*Photo: John S. Quarterman 2022-02-19*

Come as early as 8 AM, Saturday, March 3, 2023, 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. "We love supporting this event and giving back to our community! This is just another event that shows how good the Mayor and the Commission Chairman are always working together to help this community," said Bill Holt, VP of Operations, Boys & Girls Club of Valdosta. This will be an outside event, but we will recommend those riders taking advantage of the shuttle service to please wear a mask.

"I'm happy to lead this paddle for my first time," said Phil Hubbard.

“The South Georgia Film Festival is proud to support this year’s Mayor and Chairman’s Paddle in conjunction with the screening of the documentary THE WINTERING GROUNDS,” said Jason Brown, South Georgia Film Festival Director. “With the World Championship Freestyle Kayak competition taking place in Columbus, GA this Spring, producer Paige Swift and as many of the available kayakers will be in attendance both at the paddle and that evening for the film screening on the campus of Valdosta State University.”

“I’m pleased to provide an early take-out for the film crew, at my private boat ramp 2 ⅔ miles downstream,” said Paul Deloach.

“We had fun last year, and this year we listed it in our calendar!” said Davy Shaw, Recreation Coordinator, Valdosta State University CORE Outdoors.

“All elected officials present, from both Florida and Georgia, get in free, and will have three minutes each to speak, both at the put-in and at the midway point,” said Suwannee Riverkeeper John S. Quarterman. “Don’t worry: only a few of them will. But you can paddle up to them and ask questions. And thanks again to The Langdale Company for riverside access through their private property at the midway lunch stop, and at the Spook Bridge takeout, and for water quality testing.”

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.

After a few hundred feet, we pass the Land Between The Rivers, recently purchased by Lowndes County from Helen Tapp, all the way down to the Little River Confluence with the Withlacoochee River. Helen Tapp said, “Together with the 49 acres already owned by the Valdosta-Lowndes Parks and Recreation Authority, now there will be 120 contiguous acres in public stewardship, for recreation, reflection, exploration, interpretation, and celebration.” She would like it to be called Between the Rivers Nature Preserve or Troupville River Park and Nature Preserve.

We’ll see the Confluence viewscape, with rivers in three directions. Just to the left, upstream on the Withlacoochee, is the future site of a paddle boat take-out for Troupville River Camp, which will have screened-in sleeping platforms and bathrooms with hot and cold running water and air conditioning.

Paddle on downstream on 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. If the river stays as high as seems likely, we will float right over County Line Shoals, just upstream from US 84. Just below US 84 is a 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, March 4, 2023.

**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 park around Troupville Boat Ramp.

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



**Take-Out:** [Spook Bridge](#), west from Valdosta on US 84, left onto Ousley Road, right onto Old Quitman Highway, stop at the gate, and park beside the road. If you have relatives who can shuttle you back to the put-in, that also works.

**Bring:** The usual personal flotation device, boat, paddles, food, drinking water, warm clothes, and first aid kit. Also trash pickers and trash bags; every WWALS outing is also a cleanup.

**Tickets:** This outing is \$20 (twenty dollars) until February 15, then \$30 online or at the event. And it's free for elected officials.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/mayor-and-chairmans-paddle-little-and-withlacochee-rivers-tickets-518815951477>

We recommend you support the work of WWALS by becoming a WWALS member today!

<https://wwals.net/donations/#join>

**Event:** <https://www.facebook.com/events/594912931835711/>

<https://www.meetup.com/Withlacochee-Alapaha-Suwannee-Rivers-WWALS-Outings/events/281745083/>

**Paddle distance:** 11 river miles

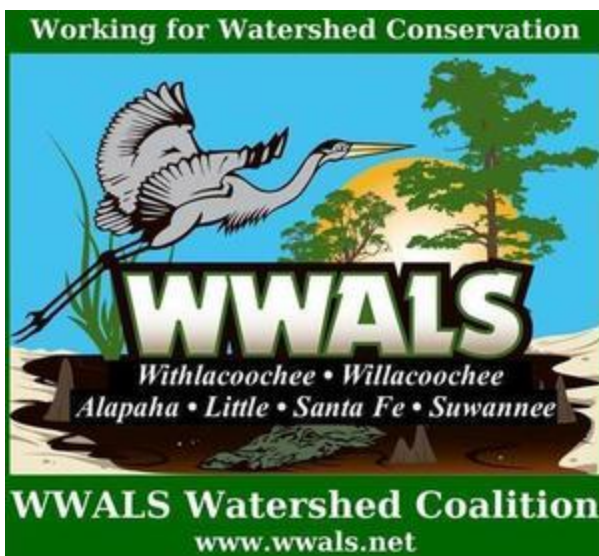
**Paddle duration:** 6 hours.

**Expedition leader:** Phil Hubbard. Do what he says for safety and enjoyment.

**Backup:** In case of bad weather or high or low water, we will postpone.

**About WWALS:** Founded in June 2012, WWALS Watershed Coalition, Inc. (**WWALS**) advocates for conservation and stewardship of the Withlacochee, Willacochee, Alapaha, Little, Santa Fe, and Suwannee River watersheds in south Georgia and north Florida through education, awareness, environmental monitoring, and citizen activities. John S. Quarterman is the **Suwannee Riverkeeper®**, which is a staff position and a project of WWALS as the member of Waterkeeper® Alliance for the Suwannee River Basin.

**Contact:** John S. Quarterman, Suwannee Riverkeeper  
WWALS Watershed Coalition



contact@suwanneeriverkeeper.org

850-290-2350,

229-242-0102

<https://wwals.net/>

PO Box 88, Hahira, GA 31632

Sharah Denton, Public Information Officer  
City of Valdosta



sdenton@valdostacity.com  
229-259-3548  
[www.valdostacity.com](http://www.valdostacity.com)

Meghan Barwick, Public Information Officer  
Lowndes County



Meghan.Barwick@lowndescounty.com  
229-671-2400  
[www.lowndescounty.com](http://www.lowndescounty.com)

Jason Brown, Director  
South Georgia Film Festival



[jasonbrown@valdosta.edu](mailto:jasonbrown@valdosta.edu)  
229-219-1298  
<https://sgff23.eventive.org/>  
<http://www.SouthGeorgiaFilm.com/>  
<https://filmfreeway.com/SOUTHGEORGIAFILMFESTIVAL>

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