

Based on the advisory at White Springs (Figure 62), suitable water conditions for most paddlers are associated with water levels at the White Springs gage between 51 and 60 ft NGVD29. At lower levels, rocks and sandbars may make the river difficult for paddling and impassable for small boats. Most commercial outfitters indicated that they would not enter the water at White Springs at levels of less than 51 ft NGVD29 (50.17 NAVD88), although some stated that paddling would still be possible if launching from the public canoe launch at Suwannee Springs, north of Live Oak, or Suwannee River State Park, and several commented that the scenery is particularly attractive at lower water levels. Paddling and river camping are said to be optimal when the White Spring gage reading is about 51 to 59 ft NGVD29; above this level, there are fewer camping beaches and more tree branches hanging into the river that can trap boats and cause capsizing. At about 65 ft NGVD29 or higher, there are no camping beaches, and the current in the river is swift, with powerful eddies and undercurrents. At 77 ft NGVD29 (about 10,400 cfs), the Suwannee River is at flood stage and well over the top of bank.

The amount of time that water level conditions preclude easy paddling or small motorized vessel passage and clearance due to low-flow conditions was selected to assess protection of recreation on the river. The potentially available water under an MFLs scenario is the change in flow associated with an increase in the number of non-ideal paddling or boating days. This is the percent-of-time approach introduced in Chapter 4 and, in this case, it is the time a particular threshold condition is not exceeded that is of interest (i.e., an increase in the occurrence of a low-flow condition).



Figure 62. Water level advisory sign at Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park [provided by SRWMD on May 14, 2013; 50 ft NAVD88 currently used for recommendation]