



Photo: Scotti Jay, of [Valdosta Caution sign](#) at Troupville Boat Ramp, 2019-12-21. Someone decorated it with flowers, like a cross at a highway wreck site.



Photo: John S. Quarterman, [Advisory at Madison Blue Spring](#), 2019-12-16



[WWALS Caution signs](#) at Knights Ferry, Nankin, and State Line Boat Ramps, [since 2020-01-10](#).

What provoked all this testing was a major sewage spill Valdosta discovered on December 9, 2019, of 7,592,910 gallons of raw sewage, into Sugar Creek. That creek is within the city limits and reaches the Withlacoochee River on the edge of town. Because there had been no rain and creek and river levels were very low, bacterial tests on the Withlacoochee River at the Georgia-Florida line remained very low for two weeks.

Nonetheless, the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) had warning signs up by December 10th, at Madison Blue Spring and even farther downstream on the Withlacoochee River. That sewage moved very slowly but finally reached the state line by December 26, 2019, and again in two more waves a week apart, driven by rain events.

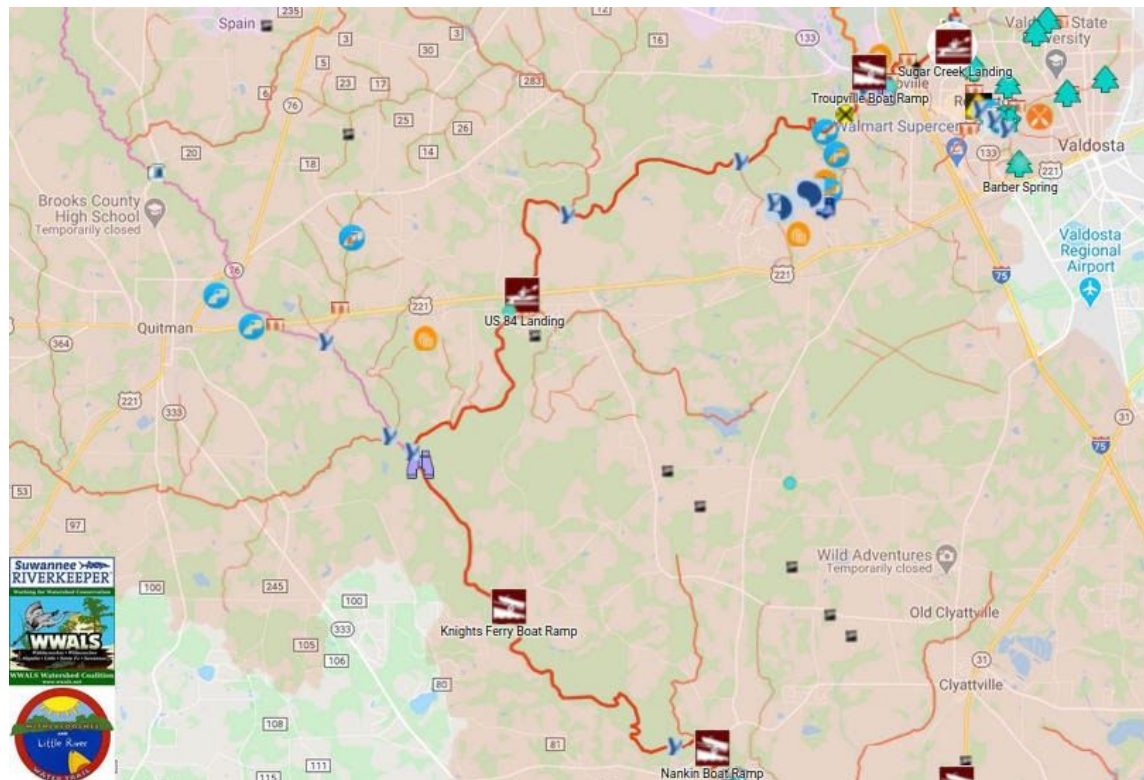
Water well testing by health departments in Madison and Hamilton Counties, Florida, also found bacterial contamination in wells near the Withlacoochee River. While baselines before December are mostly lacking, many of those well owners are convinced Valdosta's sewage spill caused their well problems.

No sewage spills have been reported anywhere in the Suwannee River Basin in Georgia or Florida since that December 2019 Valdosta spill. Yet there continue to be river contamination events.

High bacteria (*E. coli*) counts often first appear nineteen river miles downstream from Valdosta's Sugar Creek at Knights Ferry Boat Ramp, south of US 84 between Valdosta and Quitman (see map). Suzy Hall for WWALS detected that contamination when there was no other testing there.



Photo: Scotti Jay, of [Sara Jay preparing to test](#) the Withlacoochee River just above the Little River Confluence, west of Valdosta, GA, 2019-12-21.



[Quitman and Valdosta in the WWALS map of the Withlacoochee and Little River Water Trail](#).