

January 26, 2023

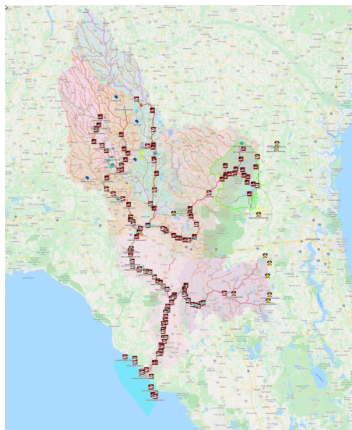
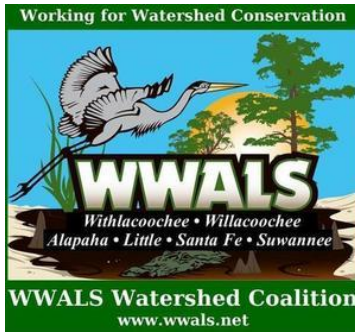
To: Scott Koons, E.D., North Central Florida Regional Planning Council

Re: **Limit water withdrawals, strip mine near Okefenokee Swamp, Valdosta trash**

Dear NCFRPC,

Thank you for the opportunity for public input.

I would like to bring to the attention of the Council three issues:



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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.

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- 1) Deadline January 31st for public comment on the North Florida Regional Water Supply Plan (NFRWSP), being revised after the first version of 2016. It still contains no water budget nor plans to limit new water withdrawals nor to phase down old ones. It does include expensive aquifer recharge projects such as a 48-inch pipe from the Suwannee River near White Springs to Falling Creek Sink to recharge Ichetucknee Springs, even though there are simpler and much less expensive methods available. I am asking the NCFRPC to comment to SRWMD and SJRWMD about the NFRWSP. <https://wwals.net/?p=60097>
- 2) Deadline March 20th for public comment on permits for a titanium strip mine within three miles of the Okefenokee Swamp on Trail Ridge in Georgia. The mine site is above the Floridan Aquifer from which we all drink, the Swamp interchanges water with the Aquifer, and the Swamp is the headwaters of the Suwannee and St. Marys Rivers. White paint is not a good reason to risk all that. The miners from Alabama, as Twin Pines Minerals LLC, are still under a Florida Consent Order for infractions at two Chemours titanium mining sites in north Florida, including the only non-diesel pollution spills in the Suwannee River Basin during Hurricane Irma. Since the Army Corps twice abdicated oversight and that issue is still in the courts, all the permit applications are with the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GA-EPD), which has opened a Public Comment period on the Mining Land Use Plan (MLUP). I am asking NCFRPC to review the MLUP and to send objections to GA-EPD. <https://wwals.net/issues/titanium-mining/>
- 3) A dozen years and still not fixed: Valdosta has a chronic trash problem, with beer cans, plastic water bottles, and styrofoam fast food containers washing down its creeks into the Withlacoochee River, all the way to the Suwannee River. Valdosta's own 2010 Stormwater Master Plan described and depicted this problem on many creeks, noted that children play in those creeks, making it a public health problem, and said it needed to be fixed "immediately." More than a decade later, after pressure by WWALS and citizens, Valdosta finally put a trash trap on Sugar Creek, the worst offending creek, which helps. But they need more trash traps on other creeks, and they need to enforce their own ordinances which require parking lot owners not to let trash escape and to strategically place trash cans and keep them cleaned out. NCFRPC was instrumental in getting GA-EPD to levy a Consent Order on Valdosta about its chronic sewage problem, which has since become much less of a problem. I am asking NCFRPC to take similar action about Valdosta's trash problem. <https://wwals.net/issues/trash>

Finally, I'd like to invite you all to join us on Saturday, February 4th, as we paddle down the Withlacoochee River from Allen Ramp to Suwannee River State Park, past

numerous springs and through many small rapids, and depending on water levels, running Class II Melvin Shoals. <https://wwals.net/?p=60177>

For the rivers and the aquifer,

John S. Quarterman,

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