

Rivers, Creeks, Lakes, and Swamps

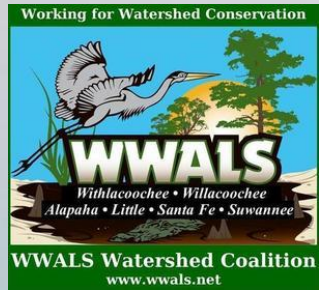
John S. Quarterman, **Suwannee RIVERKEEPER®**

and Executive Director with

WWALS Watershed Coalition, Inc. (WWALS)

a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, est. 2012, for clean water

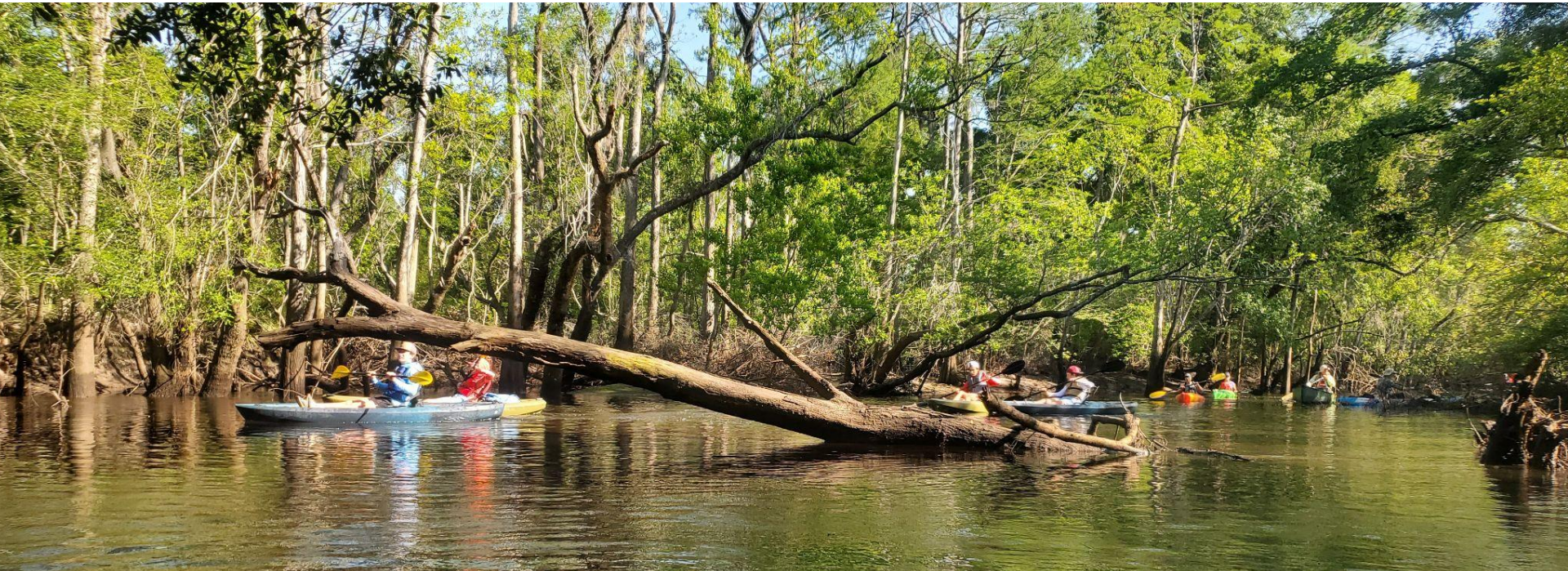
In the 10,000-square-mile Suwannee River Basin
in Georgia and Florida



Senate Study Committee on
Making Georgia the No. 1 State for Tourism
meeting in Valdosta 2025-10-15

You are all invited: Mayor and Chairman's Paddle
Saturday, March 7, 2026, Withlacoochee River
Just west of Valdosta. 40 people paddled in 2025.

- Thanks to Georgia Power for sponsoring several years now.



Chainsaw Cleanups

to cut through hurricane deadfalls across rivers

- Before the Mayor & Chairman's Paddle, on the Suwannee, Surprise Alapahoochee, etc.
- Thanks to Wild Green Future for the grant that bought outboard motors and a chainsaw.
- We wouldn't mind state support for chainsaw cleanups.

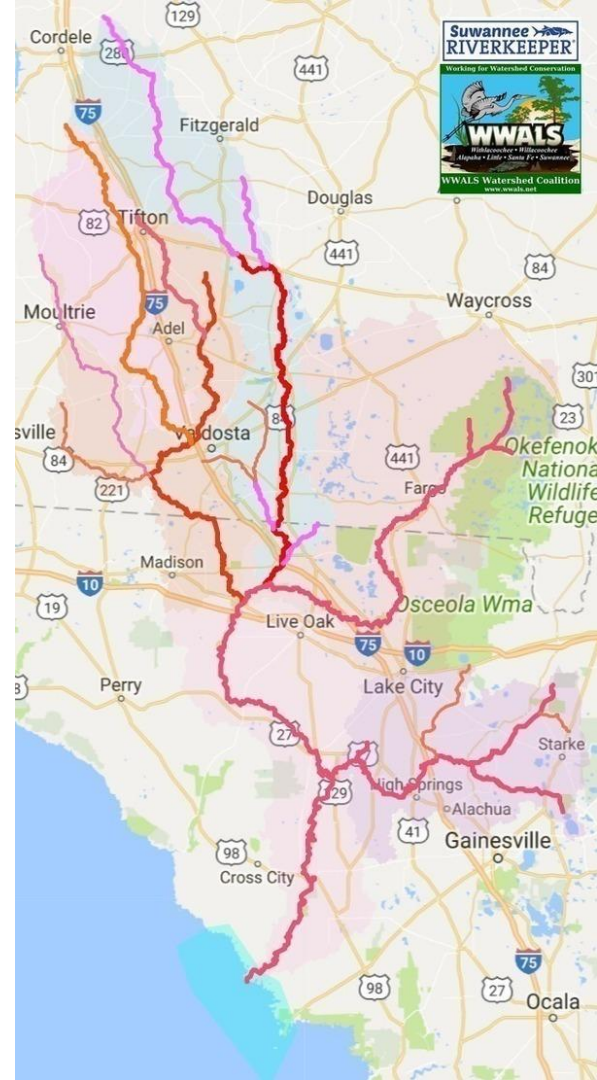


From far away to WWALS paddle outings:

- Alabama, South Carolina, and Miami
- Usually two paddles per month
- Two in Okefenokee Swamp in November & December



Six Floridians at the Gates in the Okefenokee Swamp before paddling 250 miles of the entire Suwannee River in 2.5 days



Full Moon Paddles in Banks Lake NWR

- Sunset, moonrise, and often bats, in our mini-Okefenokee living room.
- Just west of Lakeland, Georgia, about half an hour from Valdosta
- We even had a north Georgia group come to paddle on Banks Lake.



Many people find their way Using the WWALS Water Trails

- Rack cards, trifold brochures, signs, and online maps
- Mostly paid for by grants from GA-DNR.

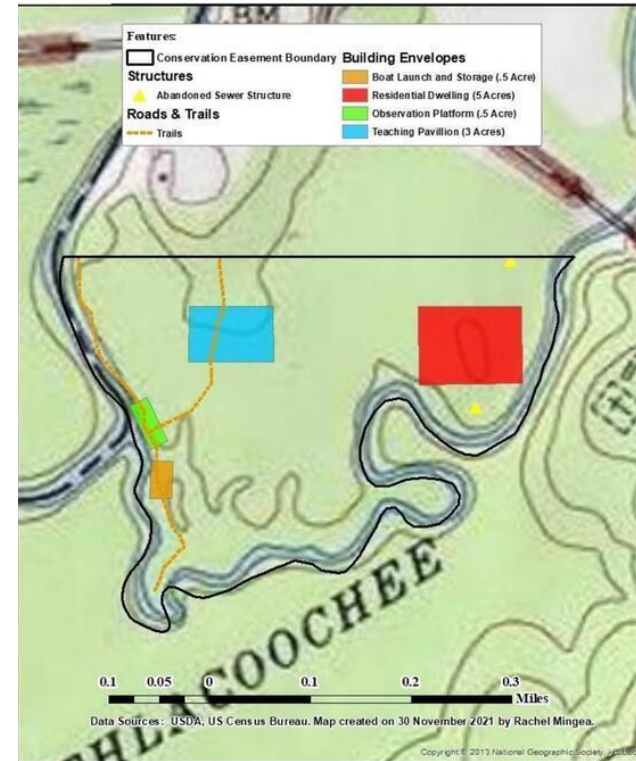


Future Troupville Nature Park and River Camp

120 acres just west of Valdosta, with interpretive hiking trail signs
At the Little River Confluence with the Withlacoochee River

Like the Suwannee River Camps, paddle in for:

- air-conditioned bathrooms, dining pavilion, five screened-in sleeping platforms
- \$1 million in Lowndes County SPLOST project list
- Potential GOSP grant application
- Maybe more access upstream and downstream



In the Fall: WWALS River Revue

Including Suwannee Riverkeeper Songwriting Contest

- People from Tennessee to central Florida



Suzanne Welander, co-author, *Canoeing and Kayaking Georgia*

- Spoke about boating passage on creeks and rivers,



- and how that is impeded by the antique 1863 Georgia navigability law.
- Few shipped bales of cotton to market down the shoal-infested Little, Withlacoochee, Alapaha, or Suwannee Rivers.
- Nowadays, economic uses of the rivers include paddling, power boating, fishing, and swimming.
- The Georgia House held a study committee on navigability, but decided to do nothing.
- Maybe the Senate can take up the case of navigability and passage.
- That would help attract more people to recreate on our waterways,
- and it would help attract the sort of people who want to work in the kinds of clean industries local and state government are trying to bring here.
- The state could also fund more than one game warden for many counties, and do more to eradicate chronic wasting disease.

Rick Davis, chair of the River contamination Task Force of the dozen downstream Florida counties

Spoke about the more than \$160 million Valdosta has spent fixing its sewer system

- He urged more water quality testing by Valdosta

Thanks to Lowndes County for no sewage spills in years.

- Thanks to Valdosta for fewer spills that don't last as long.
- Thanks to GA-EPD for the daily Sewage Spills Report,
- after WWALS got 30 GA & FL orgs to propose it in 2018.

Please fully fund Georgia Environmental Protection Division



2025-10-06--GA-EPD-Sewage-Spills-Report.html by [WWALS Watershed Coalition](https://wwals.net/issues/www/ga-spills); see <https://wwals.net/issues/www/ga-spills>

FACILITY NAME	BEGIN DATE	COUNTY	CITY	OVERFLOW LOCATION	QUANTITY GALLONS	OVERFLOW TYPE	PERMIT NUMBER	SPILL SOURCE	CAUSE	RIVER BASIN	WATERWAY IMPACTED	OVERFLOW DESTINATION
Valdosta, City of (Withlacoochee WPCP)	2025-08-23	Lowndes	Valdosta	1212 Wainwright Drive Valdosta, Georgia 31601	20,000	Raw Sewage	GA0033235	Collection System	Hurricane or Large Stormwater Event, High Levels of Inflow, Inadequate Treatment Plant Capacity High Levels of Inflow,	Suwannee	One Mile Branch	Spill Waters of the State
Valdosta, City of (Withlacoochee WPCP)	2025-08-24	Lowndes	Valdosta	3180 Wetherington Lane Valdosta, Georgia 31601	1,500,000	Raw Sewage	GA0033235	WWTP	Aging Infrastructure, Hurricane or Large Stormwater Event, High Levels of Inflow, Inadequate Treatment Plant Capacity High Levels of Inflow, Inadequate TWTDS Capacity Due to Stormwater Event,	Suwannee	Withlacoochee River	Spill Waters of the State

Water Quality Testing and Reporting

So people will know when the rivers are clean

- Friday WWALS water quality report
- from our volunteer water quality results
- using Georgia Adopt-A-Stream methods,
- from results by Valdosta Utilities, and
- sometimes with results from Florida agencies.

Yet more water quality testing is needed

- to find sources of contamination,
- including upstream from Valdosta.

The State can fund water quality testing & reporting

Maybe expand *Know Your River*

beyond Savannah and Ogeechee Rivers.

Where	2025-09-17		2025-09-18		2025-09-19		2025-09-20				2025-09-21		2025-09-22		2025-09-23		2025-09-24		2025-09-25	
Composite Water Quality by WWALS https://wwals.net/issues/testing/ Previous year:	Weekday		Weekday		Weekday		Weekend				Weekend		Weekday		Weekday		Weekday		Weekday	
	Wednesday		Thursday		Friday		Saturday		Sunday		Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday			
	Fecal Coliform	E. coli	Fecal Coliform	E. coli	Fecal Coliform	E. coli	Fecal Coliform	E. coli	Fecal Coliform	E. coli	Fecal Coliform	E. coli	Fecal Coliform	E. coli	Fecal Coliform	E. coli	Fecal Coliform	E. coli		
Georgia																				
Withlacoochee River																				
Withlacoochee River @ Franklinville Road (Tyler Bridge)																				
Beatty Branch																				
Beatty Branch @ Bemiss Road																				W33
Beatty Branch @ Beatty Road																				W1,366
Beatty Branch @ Cat Creek Road																				W1,466
Cat Creek																				
Cat Creek @ GA 37																				
Cat Creek @ GA 122																				
Cat Creek @ Cat Creek Road																				W1,205
Withlacoochee River																				
Withlacoochee River @ Skipper Bridge Gauge	Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.02"	
Withlacoochee River @ Skitter Bridge Gauge																				W66
Withlacoochee River @ Stalen Road																				
Withlacoochee River @ US 41 (N. Valdosta Rd.)			V120		V100													V210		V90
Withlacoochee River @ Langdale Park Boat Ramp																				W33
One Mile Branch																				
Wainwright Drive One Mile Branch Bridge			V2,500		V2,324													V440		V410
West Gordon Street One Mile Branch Bridge			V1,800		V1,553													V560		V560
Hightower Creek																				
St. Augustine Road			V2,000		V1,800													V800		V730
Hightower Creek Culvert																				
Baylives Road																				
Sugar Creek Bridge																				
Gortto Road			V4,000		V3,800													V1,900		W233, V1,800
Sugar Creek @ Sully Corner Landing		W100																		W366
Withlacoochee River																				
Withlacoochee River @ GA 133			V590		V680													V310		V270
Little River																				
Deep well @ 161 Royal St., Sylvester		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.39"
Little River @ Upper Ty Ty Road (Tifton)		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.55"
Little River																				
Little River @ GA 37 (Ade's Mouthe Landing)		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.01"
Folsom Bridge GA 122 (Little River Gauge)		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.38"
Little River @ Troupville Boat Ramp																				
Wetherington Branch																				
Wetherington Branch @ Wetherington Lane																				
Withlacoochee River																				
US 84 Withlacoochee Gauge		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.33"		Rain 0.01"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"		Rain 0.00"
Withlacoochee River @																				

Valdosta Spill
2,000 G. at WWTP onto dry land
<https://wwals.net/pictures/2018-10-31-ga-and-spill-resolution/spills/2025-09-24-GA-EPD-Sewage-Spills-Report-basin.html>

WWALS and others also hold cleanups

Mostly plastic drink bottles, beer cans, and styrofoam fast food containers.

- We congratulate the Lowndes County Litter Crew.
- And the City of Valdosta for putting several trash traps in its creeks,
 - and on enforcing its trash ordinances.



Cleanup, Mayday Landing, Alapaha River, 2025-09-20

- But those are fingers in the dike.
- And the trash keeps coming.

People want to visit a place that is clean.

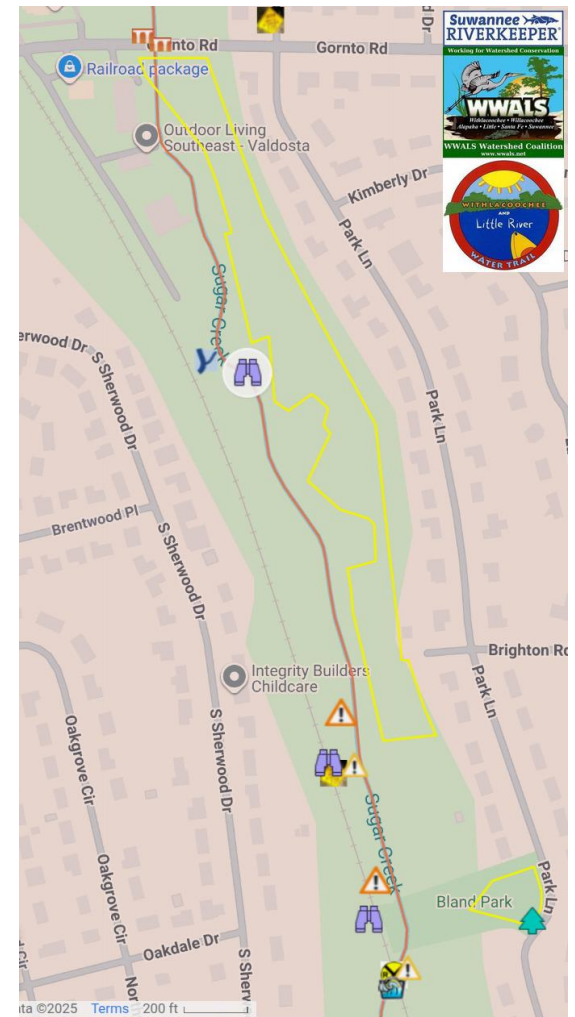
- The Senate can help stop trash at the source by passing something like SB 49 from 2024

“except for exempt items, **no persons** who are engaged as dealers in the sale at retail and who are subject to the collection of sales and use taxes under Part 2 of Article 1 of Chapter 8 of Title 48 **shall distribute any bag made of plastic film or item made of extruded polystyrene foam.**”

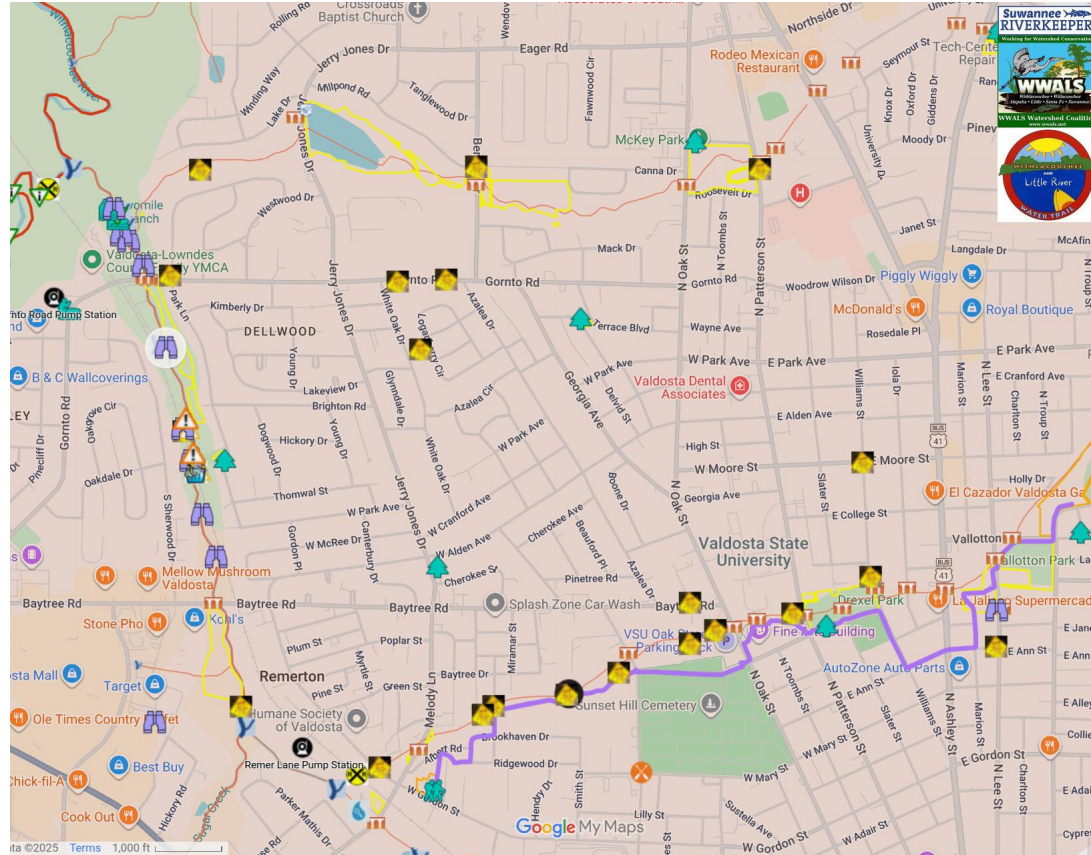
- Other states have done that, recently Colorado.

Sugar Creek Urban Greenway

- City of Valdosta owns this Sugar Creek beach
- It would be attractive as part of a creek greenway
- Once sewage spills and trash are stopped



Along Azalea City Trail, Like Waterloo Greenway on Waller Creek in Austin, Texas



So, come on down for the paddles and festivals

And the legislature can help fund infrastructure such as:

- Troupville Nature Park and River Camp,
- Water Trails,
- Chainsaw cleanups,
- Sewer systems,
- **Water quality testing,**
- **Stopping trash,**
- **Fixing the navigability law,**
- Game wardens,
- **Fully funding GA-EPD,**
- Continue funding SGMC trauma center; makes visitors more comfortable.



These make our waterways more attractive to visitors and residents.

Contact:

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