



Suwannee River Watershed: Conserving the Georgia/Florida Connection

North Florida Ecosystem Team

The Suwannee River Watershed covers approximately 9,950 square miles in south Georgia and north Florida. The watershed consists of the Suwannee River and all the creeks and streams which flow into the Suwannee as it makes its way to the Gulf of Mexico. The Suwannee River originates in the Okefenokee Swamp. Its three major tributaries -- the Alapaha, Little, and Withlacoochee rivers -- also begin in south Georgia.

Ecological Importance

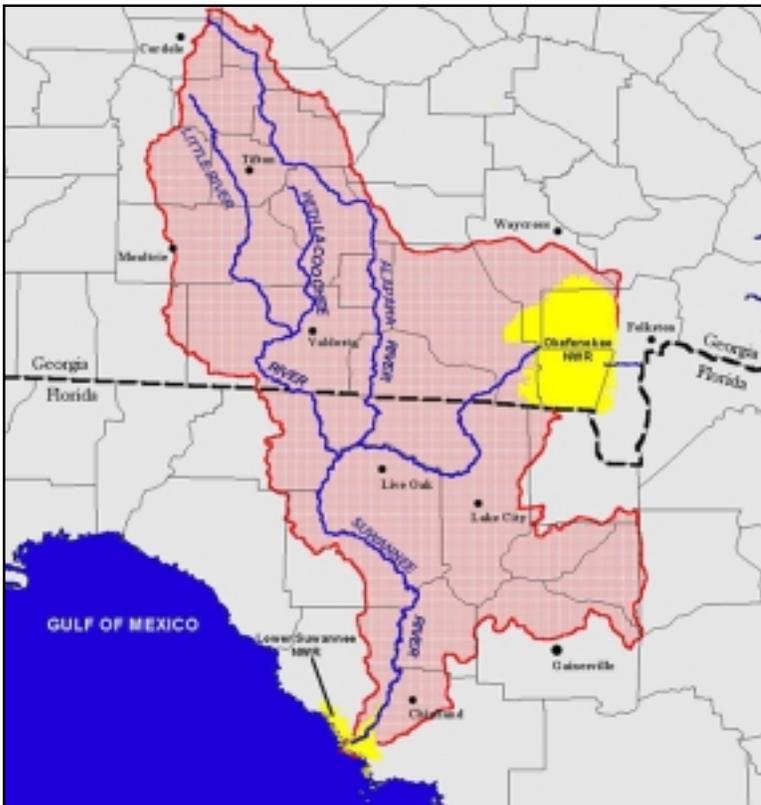
Many species of fish and wildlife depend on the waters of the Suwannee River Watershed. These rivers support many common species of fish and wildlife, such as deer, racoons, fox, egrets and herons. These waters also provide habitat for species which are no longer very common. Species of concern include:

- anadromous fish, such as Alabama shad and the threatened Gulf sturgeon;
- the endangered West Indian manatee, which uses the lower Suwannee for summer birthing;
- rare species such as the Suwannee bass, the Suwannee cooter and alligator snapping turtle; and
- migratory birds and mammals, such as the swallowtail kite or Florida black bear, which require intact habitat corridors.

Conserving The Suwannee River Basin

Portions of the basin are permanently protected under federal and state ownership. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge at the Suwannee's headwaters, and Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge at the the Suwannee's mouth. The Service also manages Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge within the watershed area. Florida and Georgia natural resource agencies also own and manage some lands adjacent to these rivers.

The Service and other conservation partners are also working with private landowners to protect water quality and water quantity throughout the basin. Two watershed protection efforts include:



Suwannee Basin Interagency Alliance: an agency partnership between the Service, the Suwannee River Water Management District, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and Georgia Environmental Protection Division, which promotes voluntary, cooperative river basin management with the goal of developing and implementing a basin-wide management plan

Upper Suwannee River Watershed Initiative: a citizen-led organization which works to identify and solve problems that affect the water, soil, forests, and quality of life of citizens in the Upper Suwannee River Watershed. Local economies will also benefit from the support of industries dependent on clean and abundant resources, such as timber production, agriculture, and eco-tourism.

For more information about the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's efforts to conserve the Suwannee River Watershed, contact:

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