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Florida Designated Paddling Trails

Merritts Mill Pond

Chipola Terrace

Merritts Mill Pond Paddling Trail

Mallory Heights

Marianna

Oakdale

Star

Simsville

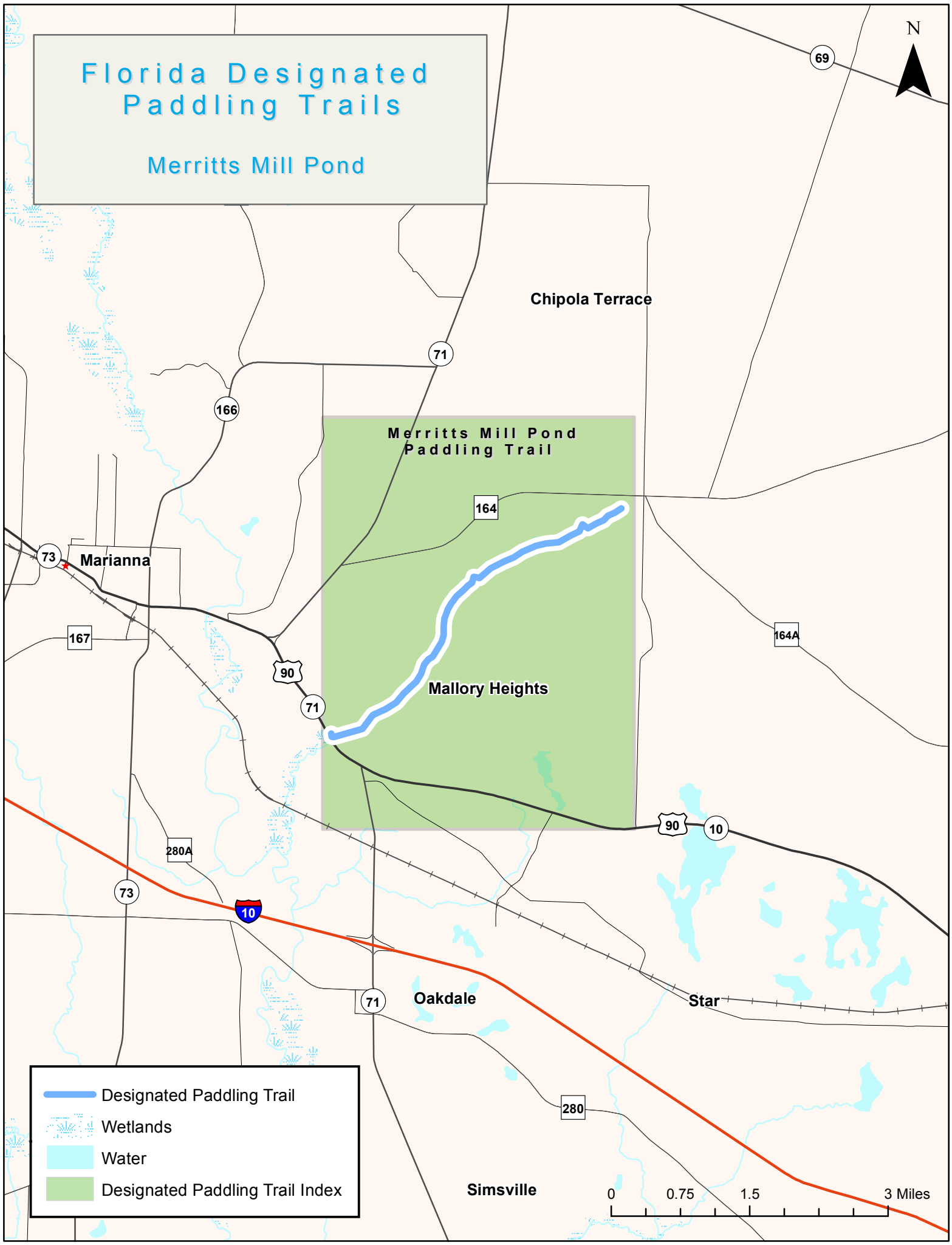
Designated Paddling Trail

Wetlands

Water

Designated Paddling Trail Index

0 0.75 1.5 3 Miles











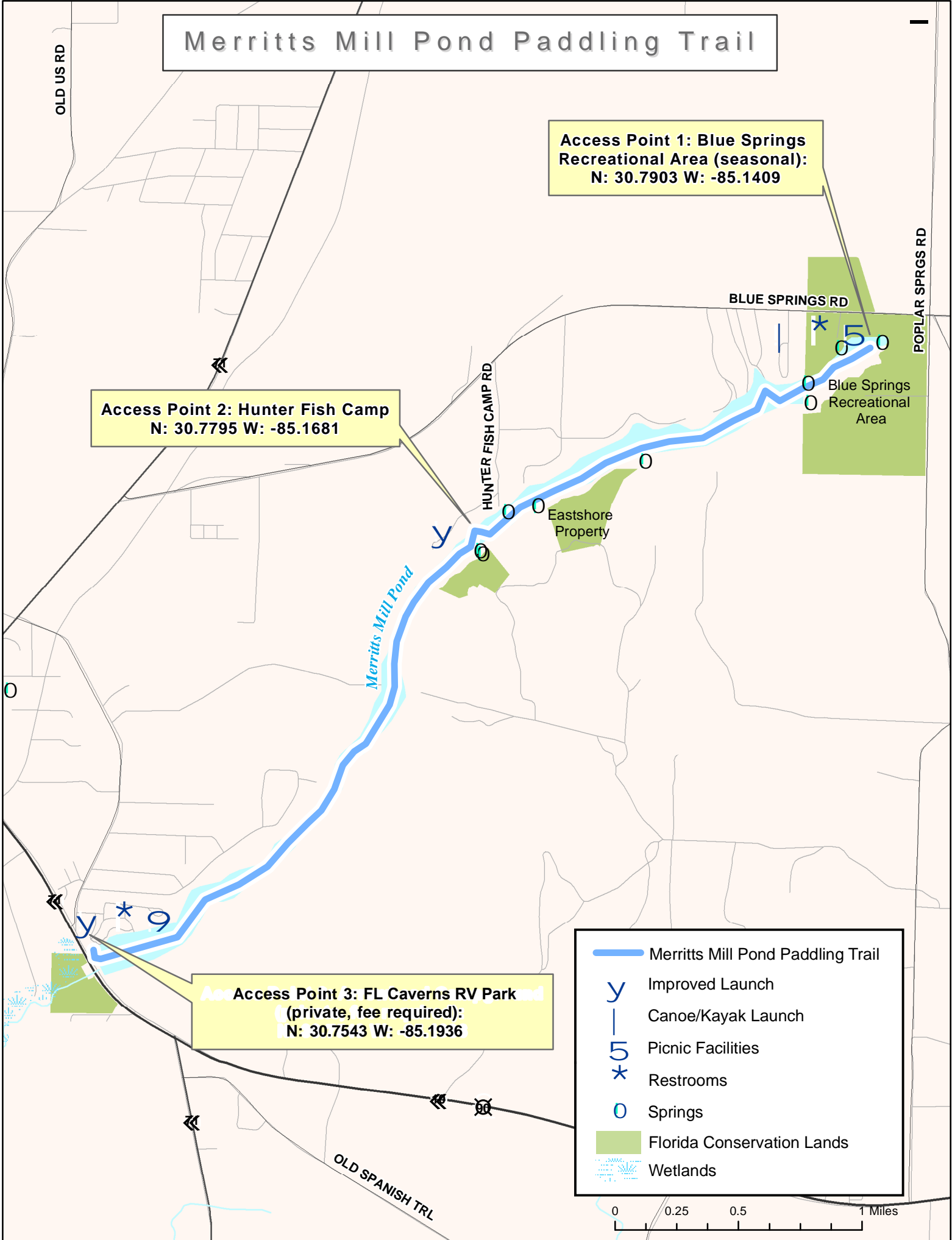
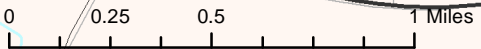
Merritts Mill Pond Paddling Trail

**Access Point 1: Blue Springs
Recreational Area (seasonal):
N: 30.7903 W: -85.1409**

**Access Point 2: Hunter Fish Camp
N: 30.7795 W: -85.1681**

**Access Point 3: FL Caverns RV Park
(private, fee required):
N: 30.7543 W: -85.1936**

-  Merritts Mill Pond Paddling Trail
-  Improved Launch
-  Canoe/Kayak Launch
-  Picnic Facilities
-  Restrooms
-  Springs
-  Florida Conservation Lands
-  Wetlands





Merritt's Mill Pond Paddling Trail Guide

The Waterway

Merritt's Mill Pond near Marianna is a unique 202-acre spring-fed lake about 4 miles in length with crystal clear waters. Merritt's Mill Pond flows into Spring creek, which starts just south of the dam on US 90 and is popular in the summer with throngs of people lazily floating in the cool water. Spring Creek continues for another 2.5 miles before it joins the Chipola River Paddling Trail. The Pond is encircled with tall cypress wreathed in waving Spanish moss, offering shade to paddlers who like to wind between the trees. There are crystal blue springs available to swim and snorkel in and submerged caverns offer adventure for certified cave divers. Jackson Blue, Shangri-la, Twin Caves, Hole-in-the-Wall, Gator Hole and Indian Washtub are six delightful springs to explore. There are a large number of submerged logs just beneath the surface of the lake which makes navigating a motor boat challenging. Merritt Mill Pond is best accessed by canoe, kayak, or small boat. Fishing is great at the Pond and it currently holds the state record for Redear Sunfish at 4.86 pounds (until recently this was the world record).

The Paddling Experience

Merritt's is perfect for beginning paddlers and an excellent place to take children as the clear waters reveal lots of fish, turtles, and interesting underwater sights. Paddlers have a choice of three access sites. One can put in at the south end of the dam at the Florida Caverns RV Resort for a fee and paddle north to Jackson Blue Springs, a distance of about 4 miles. Alternate put-in locations are the public boat ramp at Hunter Fish Camp Road or at Jackson Blue Springs park itself (although the park is only open during the summer months.)

Access Points

#1 Jackson Blue Springs Recreation Area (open Memorial Day through Labor Day)

This is a great family destination with volleyball courts, a playground, picnic pavilions and canoe/kayak rentals. The water temperature is perfect for swimming on a hot summer's day. There is an admission fee. *From US 90, turn north on SR 71, go 1.2 miles, turn right (east) on Blue Springs Rd. for 3.2 miles.*

#2 Hunter Fish Camp Ramp

This is a paved ramp with no fee. *From US 90, turn north on SR 71, go 1.2 miles, turn right (east) on Blue Springs Rd. for 1.6 miles, then right (south) on Hunter Fish Camp Rd. to the ramp*

#3 [Florida Caverns RV Resort](#)

This a private camp ground just off of US 90 on the northwest side of the bridge. Fee for launch.

Outfitters and Shuttle Service

[Florida Caverns RV Resort](#), 850-482-5583

[Bear Paw Adventures](#), 850-482-4948



Merritt's Mill Pond Paddling Trail Guide

Jackson Blue Springs Recreation Area, (850) 482-2114

Base Camp

Florida Caverns State Park makes an excellent base camp for exploring [Jackson County](#), an excellent wildlife viewing, cave diving, hiking and paddling destination. There are enticing hiking trails to explore: the [Bellamy Bridge Heritage Trail](#), the [Hinson Trail](#) and great paddling trails besides Merritt's Mill Pond: Upper Chipola, the Chipola River, and [Ocheesee Pond](#).

Stop by the Visitors Center in the park and tour the caves that have a long and interesting geologic history. Beginning about 38 million years ago when sea levels were much higher and the southeastern coastal plain of the United States was submerged, shells, coral and sediments gradually accumulated on the sea floor. As sea levels fell, these materials hardened into limestone. During the last million years, acidic groundwater dissolved crevices just below the surface creating cave passages large enough to walk through. Dazzling stalactites, stalagmites, flowstone and other fragile cave-drip formations were formed by a similar dissolving process by the naturally acidic rainwater. The park's bluffs, springs and caves are referred to as karst terrain, and the caves provide habitat for the blind cave crayfish, cave salamanders and three species of cave roosting bats.



Liz Sparks



Shangri-La Springs, Liz Sparks