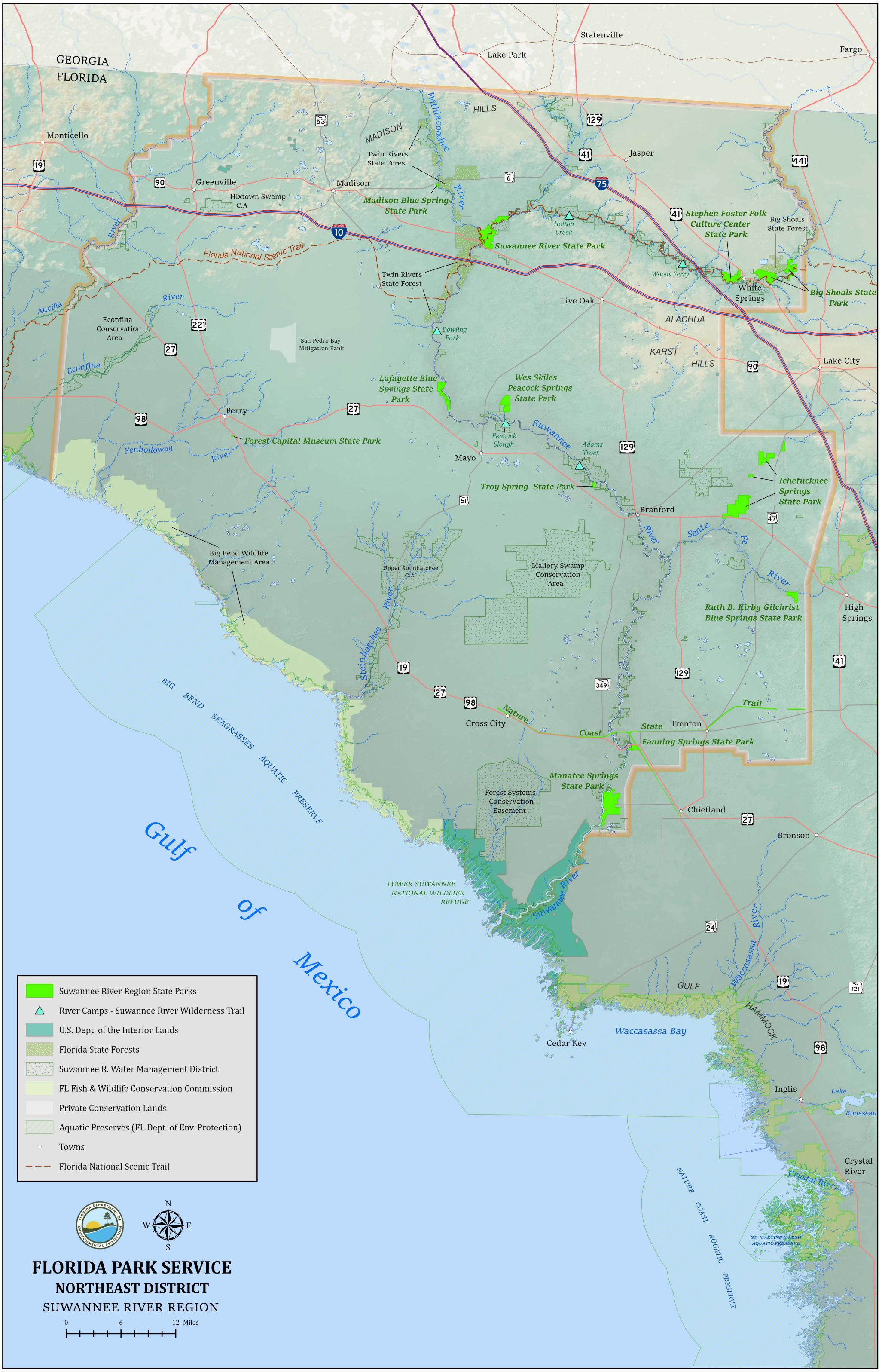
SUWANNEE RIVER
Regional Introduction


GEORGIA
FLORIDA
Statenville
Lake Park
Fargo
Monticello
Greenville
Madison
Hixtown Swamp C.A
Twin Rivers State Forest
Withlacoochee River
MADISON
HILLS
Jasper
Madison Blue Spring State Park
Suwannee River State Park
Holton Creek
Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park
Big Shoals State Forest
Big Shoals State Park
White Springs
Florida National Scenic Trail
Twin Rivers State Forest
Live Oak
ALACHUA
KARST HILLS
Lake City
Aucilla River
Econfina Conservation Area
Econfina River
San Pedro Bay Mitigation Bank
Dowling Park
Lafayette Blue Springs State Park
Wes Skiles Peacock Springs State Park
Peacock Slough
Suwannee River
Adams Tract
Perry
Forest Capital Museum State Park
Fenholloway River
Mayo
Troy Spring State Park
Ichetucknee Springs State Park
Branford
Santa Fe River
Big Bend Wildlife Management Area
Upper Steinhatchee C.A.
Mallory Swamp Conservation Area
Steinhatchee River
Ruth B. Kirby Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park
High Springs
BIG BEND SEAGRASSES AQUATIC PRESERVE
Cross City
Nature Coast State Trail
Trenton
Fanning Springs State Park
Manatee Springs State Park
Forest Systems Conservation Easement
Chiefland
Bronson
Gulf of Mexico
LOWER SUWANNEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
Suwannee River
Waccasassa River
GULF HAMMOCK
Waccasassa Bay
Cedar Key
Inglis
Lake Rousseau
Crystal River
NATURE COAST AQUATIC PRESERVE
ST. MARTINS MARSH AQUATIC PRESERVE
Suwannee River Region State Parks
River Camps - Suwannee River Wilderness Trail
U.S. Dept. of the Interior Lands
Florida State Forests
Suwannee R. Water Management District
FL Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission
Private Conservation Lands
Aquatic Preserves (FL Dept. of Env. Protection)
Towns
Florida National Scenic Trail
N
W
E
S
FLORIDA PARK SERVICE
NORTHEAST DISTRICT
SUWANNEE RIVER REGION
0
6
12 Miles

SUWANNEE RIVER PLANNING REGION

REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY

The Suwannee River planning region encompasses roughly the northeastern third of District 2, an area stretching west to the Aucilla River and east to the Cody Escarpment. This area is largely defined and characterized by the Suwannee River, which links all parks in the planning region either directly or by tributary. Although the exact boundaries are somewhat loosely defined, the transition between the state's peninsula and panhandle occurs within this planning region, marking the geographical divide between north and northwest Florida.

Suwannee River Region State Parks:

- Big Shoals State Park.
- Fanning Springs State Park.
- Forest Capital Museum State Park.
- Ichetucknee Springs State Park.
- Lafayette Blue Springs State Park.
- Madison Blue Spring State Park.
- Manatee Springs State Park.
- Ruth B. Kirby Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park.
- Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park.
- Suwannee River State Park.
- Troy Spring State Park.
- Wes Skiles Peacock Springs State Park.

REGIONAL GEOMORPHOLOGY, TOPOGRAPHY, AND SOILS

The Okefenokee Basin Geomorphological District extends into the planning region at Big Shoals State Park. The basin is essentially a poorly-drained ancient terrace that includes the southern portion of the Okefenokee Swamp. Silicate sediments such as quartz sands and clays cover the carbonate limestone, limiting downward percolation and the formation of karst features. Similar to adjacent natural and silvicultural areas, the park's landscape is dominated by pine flatwoods.

The vast majority of the Suwannee River planning region falls within the Ocala Karst Geomorphological District. There are several subdivisions within the district described in relation to state parks. Madison Blue Spring State Park, Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park, Suwannee River State Park, Lafayette Blue Springs State Park, Wes Skiles Peacock Springs State Park, Troy Spring State Park and Ichetucknee Springs State Park all occur within the Branford Karst Plain. This province is rich in karst features such as springs, sinkholes, swallets, caves and limestone outcroppings. All the previously mentioned parks occur along the Suwannee River, with the exception of Madison Blue Spring State Park, which occurs along the Withlacoochee River 12 miles upstream of its confluence with the Suwannee River. Several of these units are home to lush hardwood forests, largely the result of abundant limestone at or near the surface that influences soil acidity.

Fanning Springs State Park and Manatee Springs State Park also occur along the Suwannee River, although farther downstream within the Chiefland Karst Plain. This relatively flat coastal karst plain, covered by pine flatwoods, hardwood forests and mesic hammocks, is split evenly by the river. Like the Branford Karst Plain, it contains many first and second magnitude springs.

Ruth B. Kirby Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park is located along the Santa Fe River at the far northern edge of the northern Brooksville Ridge, a wide swath of rolling hills extending south to the Withlacoochee River.

Forest Capital Museum State Park sits alone in the Perry Karst Plain, an area marked by many small springs and creeks that disappear into sinkholes.

In general, uplands within the planning region have deep, well-drained, sandy soils, although there are exceptions where limestone strata are at or near the surface, particularly within vicinity of springs. Soils within the floodplains of the Suwannee River and its tributaries tend to be poorly drained.

REGIONAL HYDROLOGY

The planning region's hydrology is dominated by the Suwannee River. With nearly 300 documented springs, the Suwannee River watershed has one of the highest concentrations of freshwater springs in the United States. Over half of Florida's 33 first magnitude springs contribute their waters to the river either directly or via tributary. This groundwater input, particularly along the middle stretch of the river, is the source of nearly all inflow to the Suwannee River during times of drought.

The Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP) will continue its tradition of close cooperation with state and federal agencies and independent researchers engaged in hydrological research and monitoring in the region, and it will encourage and facilitate additional research as needed in specific state parks. DRP will rely upon agencies such as the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and Florida Department of Environmental Protection to keep it apprised of any declines in surface water quality or any suspected contamination of groundwater in the region. District staff will continue to monitor Environmental Resource Permit and Water Use Permit requests for the region to provide timely and constructive comments that promote protection of water resources. Additional cooperative efforts may include facilitating the review and approval of research permits and providing researchers with assistance in the field, including orientation to park resources. Recommendations derived from these monitoring and research activities will be essential to the decision-making process during management planning. A primary focus should be the documentation of ecological responses to decreased spring discharge due to overconsumption of groundwater, river flooding due to increasingly severe rain events, and increasing tidal influence (along the river's lower stretch) due to sea level rise and associated tropical cyclones.

Suwannee River

The Suwannee River originates in the Okefenokee Swamp and flows on a curving path through Georgia and north Florida on its way to the Gulf of Mexico. Although the river's course is largely fixed within the confines of its carved limestone banks, it has alluvial characteristics in terms of sediment transport, particularly during times of increased flow. The river is mostly fed via watershed until its confluence with the Withlacoochee River. Downstream of this juncture, the river is increasingly spring-fed. The river reaches the Gulf of Mexico near the small unincorporated town of Suwannee.

Santa Fe River

The Santa Fe River originates just west of Keystone Heights as a blackwater stream emerging from Santa Fe Lake. The river picks up flow along its westerly course from a multitude of springs. Like many streams that cross the Cody Escarpment, the Santa Fe has a section that flows underground. Emerging at River Rise Preserve State Park, the river continues its aboveground course for 28 miles until merging with the dark waters of the Suwannee River near the town of Branford.

Ichetucknee River

The Ichetucknee River originates at a first magnitude springs complex within Ichetucknee Springs State Park. Along its course, the spring-run stream picks up flow from numerous named and unnamed springs, all contributing to the river's clear waters. These springs include Cedar Head Spring, Blue Jug, Mission Spring, Devil's Eye Spring, Grassy Hole, Mill Pond Spring and Coffee Spring. The first 3.5 miles of the river are protected within the park. The river continues downstream of the park for another 2.5 miles until its confluence with the Santa Fe River.

Withlacoochee River (North)

The Withlacoochee River originates from watershed just northwest of Nashville, Georgia. The river flows south for 93 miles before crossing into Florida for another 22 miles. The Withlacoochee picks up considerable groundwater flow from springs along its Florida stretch, including Madison Blue Spring, before its confluence with the Suwannee River. The Withlacoochee is the Suwannee River's largest tributary along its upper stretch.

REGIONAL RESOURCE-BASED RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Suwannee River planning region state parks protect some of the most ecologically significant water resources in Florida, providing outstanding water-based recreational opportunities. Swimming and snorkeling are popular ways to enjoy and explore the region's many springs. Certified cave divers take a deeper plunge into the subterranean labyrinth of the Floridan aquifer.

For those who prefer to enjoy the water from above, the region's parks offer a variety of paddling adventures, for beginners to experts with equipment rental opportunities provided. Long-distance paddlers in pursuit of adventure and tranquility can enjoy the Suwannee River Wilderness State Trail, a watery corridor largely buffered by unspoiled floodplain. This wilderness paddling trail and its river camps provide a unique immersion into remote sections of the river that few see.

The uplands buffering the rivers offer miles of hiking, biking and equestrian opportunities with destinations to overlook the shoals, glimpse karst windows and wind along spring runs. Forest Capital Museum connects to the story of this region's uplands. All these resource-based adventures place people inside the natural systems of the Suwannee River planning region, offering clear vantage points of the wild places we all depend on.

REGIONAL INTERPRETIVE THEMES

The Suwannee River planning region's interpretive themes are linked to its spring-fed river systems and the mosaic of landscapes in their watersheds. These features have been both a lure and an asset for generations from indigenous people to today. On water's journey through the region, dark, tannin waters meet cool, freshwater springs, pine forested banks transition to floodplain swamps, and high limestone bluffs shift to wide open saltmarsh. The fragile ecosystems above and below showcase the need to safeguard water quality for future generations. Listed below is the **Central Park Theme (CPT**) for each regional park, highlighting its most significant natural or cultural features:

Big Shoals State Park	Traverse Florida's ancient geology at Big Shoals State Park, where limestone bluffs overlook thunderous whitewater displays of nature's beauty and power.
Fanning Springs State Park	Beyond the dark edge of a cypress swamp, electric blue waters of Fanning Springs State Park lead to scenic vistas along the historic Suwannee River.
Forest Capital Museum State Park	Rooted in Florida's forestry industry, Forest Capital Museum State Park educates us about the history and health of Florida's pine forests.

Ichetucknee Springs State Park	A colorful underwater forest ripples within one of Florida's healthiest spring-fed rivers, the Ichetucknee, as it meanders through a timeless natural landscape.
Lafayette Blue Springs State Park	Flowing beneath the land bridge that straddles its main spring run, the secluded waters of Lafayette Blue Springs State Park are hidden amongst shaded hammocks and dynamic sinkholes.
Madison Blue Spring State Park	A first magnitude spring along the Withlacoochee River, Madison Blue Spring State Park is a world-renowned swimming hole shaped by ancient limestone.
Manatee Springs State Park	From the expansive forested uplands to the extensive aquatic cave system, Manatee Springs State Park is a tapestry of richly textured habitats connected by Florida's outstanding waters.
Ruth B. Kirby Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park	The turquoise waters and vibrant underwater forest of Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park reveal how we all play a role in nourishing or altering the beauty and vitality of our springs.
Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park	What began as a memorial to a renowned songwriter, Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center has evolved into a legendary celebration of the diverse people and traditions that continue to build Florida's living folk culture.
Suwannee River State Park	Two rivers converge at Suwannee River State Park, where memories of ghost towns and Civil War earthworks accompany you along the trails.
Troy Spring State Park	The mysterious waters of Troy Spring State Park hold sunken history along the Suwannee River that inspires explorers to dive deeper.
Wes Skiles Peacock Springs State Park	Crystal clear waters embrace divers who brave the underwater caves at Peacock Springs State Park while hikers trace their journey though the aquifer from forest trails above.