Additional Resources

Weather and Wildlife If you suspect a fish, wildlife, boating or environmental violation, contact FWC's Wildlife Alert at 888-404-3922. Use this line to also report dead, sick or injured sea turtles and marine mammals.

USGS Current Water Data for Florida: http://waterdata.usgs.gov/fl/nwis/rt NOAA Tides, Currents and Weather: https://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/

Recreation

For a list of fishing guides, ecotours and kayak/canoe rentals in the Franklin County area: http://www.saltyflorida.com/things-to-do/nature-outdoors/

paddle and bike: http://floridahikes.com/northwest-florida Conservation Invasive species identification, EDD MapS reporting and

Explore the *Florida Hikes!* website for places to hike, camp,

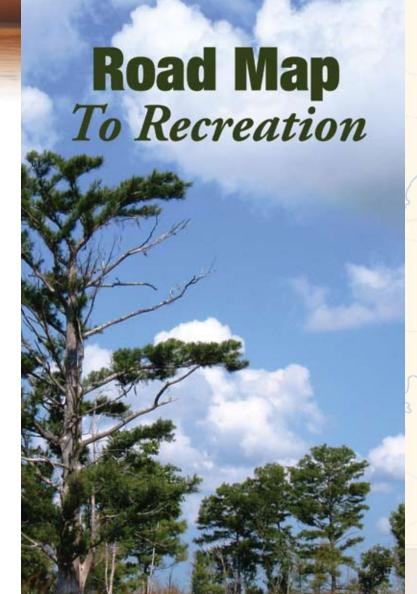
partnerships: http://www.eddmaps.org/Florida/ Overview of prescribed fire: http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/ management/rx.html

For information on the Research, Stewardship, Education and Coastal Training Programs at ANERR visit: http://www.dep.state.fl.us/coastal/sites/apalachicola/





Published 2016. Initial funding providing by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Florida Coastal Office.



A guide to exploring the recreation opportunities

of the Apalachicola River and Bay Basin

Lower Apalachicola River Corridor

most productive estuaries in the world. This gem of natural diversity that we call the Apalachicola River and Bay System includes upland, floodplain, riverine, estuarine and barrier island environments, which are closely interrelated and influenced by each other.

Where A River Meets the Sea

Welcome to the Apalachicola River and Bay Basin

Deep in the tupelo and

cypress swamps of the

floodplain, dark and rich

water seeps into the flow

of a large alluvial river that

makes its way to one of the



The Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve (ANERR) encompasses nearly 250,000 acres of public lands and waters in the Florida Panhandle. Public lands within the boundary of ANERR are managed by the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Florida Coastal Office, Northwest Florida Water Management District (NWFWMD), Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), U.S.

Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and DEP's Division of Parks and Recreation. The Florida Forest Service (FFS) and U.S. Forest Service also manage public lands adjacent to the Reserve. This diverse group of natural resource managers seeks to conserve the biological function of the watershed, its natural communities and the many ecosystem services they provide



Although the Reserve encompasses just the lower 52 miles of the Apalachicola River, it is connected to a sprawling watershed that traverses three states and covers nearly 20,000 square miles. The upper reaches of the basin begin about 90 miles above Atlanta, where the Chattahoochee River originates as a small mountain stream. Flowing south for 436 miles it meets the 350 mile long Flint River at the Florida state line and Lake Seminole. Below this point, we call the river Apalachicola as it stretches 107 miles to Apalachicola Bay and eventually the Gulf of Mexico.

The many habitats found within the Apalachicola River watershed support a high diversity of plant and animal species. More than 1,300 plant species have been identified here with 103 of them listed as threatened or endangered. This region contains more than 40 species of amphibians and 80 species of reptiles, giving the central Panhandle one of the highest diversities of these animal groups in North America. The Apalachicola basin lies on the eastern fringe of the Mississippi flyway, thus receiving large numbers of birds from both the Midwest and Atlantic Seaboard during migratory periods. Lands and waters of the Forgotten Coast serve as some of the most important bird habitats in the southeastern United States, harboring 350 species throughout the different seasons. Over 270 species of fish have been observed, of which approximately 90 are strictly freshwater species, as well as more than 50 species of mammal

This Roadmap to Recreation aims to showcase the recreational opportunities within these natural habitats across our conservation lands. Primitive camping, hiking, nature observation and paddling are just a few of the ways to enjoy the ecosystems, while also having minimal impact on the natural communities. Please be thoughtful of your footprint on our natural and cultural resources while you explore, connect and enjoy the beauty of the Apalachicola River and Bay Basin!



Regional Land Stewardship in the Panhandle



Recreation Survival Chart

St. Vincent Apalachicola River Apalachicola River **Tate's Hell National Wildlife State Forest & Wildlife Management Area** Florida River Island Multiple access points by Accessible by vehicles: Free to public Recreation Aera accessible Free to public Free to public by vehicles, but most areas (fees apply at shuttle Pets leashed accessible by boat; service from Indian Pass); apply in some areas); Pets leashed accessible by boat only; ets leashed in all areas Restrooms and potable Restrooms may be strooms, potable water, Restrooms and potable Restrooms and potable **Amenities** water available at ailable at check station potable water available Indian Pass boat launch: elevator access and water available at water available at water available at at six beach pavilions. Restrooms may be available ellular service availabl developed Recreation Florida River Island designated Recreation Recreation Area; the main campground, at West Pass Cabin/Indian at the Nature Center Areas and Camps; Areas and Camps; Limited cellular service Limited cellular service Limited cellular service Limited cellular service in most areas Pass; No potable water; and youth camp area. in many areas in most areas in many areas Limited cellular service in many areas in some areas in most areas Designated + total miles including 89 total miles including No primitive hiking trails 0.5 mile Pine to Palm Trail No primitive hiking trails 3.5 total miles including 1+ total miles including Primitive Hiking West Pass Trail, Island Central Trail, East Beach Wright Lake Trail, Trail of but hiking allowed on (Sand Beach) but hiking allowed on Gap Point Nature Trail, East Slough Boardwalk Lakes and Camel Lake multiple-use roads and West Beach ock Trail, Sike's Cut Trail, Loop, Fort Gadsden Trail K ure Center Boardwalks Florida National Scenic Trail 1,500 miles 8 miles 100+ miles 40+ miles 90+ miles 4 miles of unpaved road Multiple-use funpaved roads (LSGI) of mostly unpaved roads of unpaved roads of unpaved roads of unpaved roads (plus nearly 6 miles of paved) of unpaved roads Roads 100+ miles within the Part of the 1,645 mile 19+ miles along the 7 miles along the Jackson **Designated** ugh and Chipley Creek; Apalachicola River; Part of Apalachicola River WEA Apalachicola River: and Apalachicola Rivers; Circumnavigational Trail Circumnavigational Trail **Paddling Trails** Part of the 1,645 mile the 163 mile Apalachicola Part of the 163 mile State Paddling Trail System 8+ miles along Columbus, Apalachicola River (11 designated trails, see Little Huckleberry, Pine Log Trail; Part of the 62 mile Blueway Paddling Trail Map 4); Part of the 163 and Huckleberry Creeks; Lower Ochlockonee River mile Apalachicola River Part of the 122 mile State Trail Blueway Paddling Trail Panhandle Intra Coastal

Restrooms, showers and Restrooms available at the Restrooms and potable designated Recreation Areas and Camps; Limited cellular service 9+ total miles including Trail, Dwarf Cypress (plus 19 miles paved) 10+ miles along Whiskey George, Cash Creek, High Bluff Creeks; Part of the 25 mile New River Paddling Trail; Part of the 62 mile Lower Ochlockonee River State Trail; Part of the 1,64 Naterway Paddling Trail mile Circumnavigational Tra 24 launches total 30 launches total Many public boat ramps 1 launch 7 launches total 1 boat launch with 2 primitive boat launches No designated boat ramps **Water Access** and beach access available or hand launches but beach (18 boat ramps, 6 hand (boat ramp at Florida River (5 boat ramps, 2 hand (5 boat ramps, .ble; 2 public wood docks launches), Island Recreation Area) launches) Abercrombie Boat Ramp access is available; 1 boat 25 hand launches); 1 wood 9 lakes/ponds at Pine Log) house for staff use only; dock (Cash Creek) essible from Eastpoint and Boat launch across Indian St. George Island (SGI); Pass open to public ayak launch at Nick's Hole (access from water only) 1 designated full-facility 28 hunt camps, 6 designated campgrounds, 1 designated campground 4 designated campgrounds No public camping **Primitive** campground (60 sites); (total 10 campsites) No public permitted; Overnight stays 15 campsites and Free and year-round; 19 hunt camps and dispersed (total 17 campsites) with Camping First come, first camping available year-round at Florida River Island permit (free); No permit camping permitted 2 primitive camps on allowed only in conjunction 2 campgrounds; Most sites A F

required at Whiskey George

primitive camp; Dispersed

camping is allowed

throughout the WEA

(14 days max)

Bloody Bluff, Howard's

Creek Agriculture Fields)

Horseback-riding

and biking allowed on

multi-use roads

under Apalachicola River

and dove hunting popular;

Check the Regulations

Summary and hunt calendar

before you visit. Freshwater

and saltwater fishing

Panama City, FL 32409

Apalachicola National Apalachicola District Office NWFWMD Headquarters Northwest Florida Regional Northwest Florida Regional St. George Island State Park

akes, barrier island kingsnakes, longleaf pine mammal species, as well 4 designated GFBT sites across flatwoods and river habitats; St. George Island

Vast, forested floodplain White-tailed deer, raccoons, Wild turkeys, white-tailed Shorebirds and seabirds,

floodplain habitats

Horseback-riding

and biking allowed on

Deer, hog, turkey and

dove are popular; Check

the Regulations Summary

saltwater fishing available

FWC Office

Panama City, FL 32409

November and mid-January. you visit; Freshwater and

(Day Use/Camping fee apply in some areas); High Bluff Coastal Hiking 850+ miles of unpaved road

access and fishing; Specia

Use Permit required (fees

at sites except Womack

Creek Camping Area

flatwoods and coastal ridge

habitats; 2 designated GFB

sites (Deep Creek Tract, Hig

Bluff Coastal Hiking Trail)

145 miles designated

(permit required); biking

allowed on non-OHV roads

and on multiple-use trails

under Tate's Hell Wildlife

gun and muzzle loading

gun hunting season, a

State Forest Use Permit

is required for primitive

camping and extended

hunt camp stays (fee).

Freshwater and saltwate

fishing available

Florida Forest Service

Carrabelle, FL 32322

850-697-3734

First-come, first-served Hunting managed by FW0

weapons). FWC issues regulations. During generations.

promotes native plant communities. Recreational opportunities in Florida's State Forests are as diverse as the resources themselves. Most of the outdoor activities in the forests can be

Statewide Recreation Programs

The Great Florida Birding Trail (GFBT) is a 2,000 mile long collection of more than

500 locations in Florida where bird and wildlife habitats are protected. The trail promotes environmental education and ecotourism. Some local sites that have been designated along this trail include: St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge, Cash Bayou and Sand Beach Day Use Areas, Fort Gadsden Historic Site, High Bluff Coastal Hiking Trail, St. George Island State Park and Unit 4 (East Hole) on St. George

La Florida is the "Land of Flowers." The Panhandle is considered one of the best areas in the state to view native wildflowers in natural ecosystems because of Pitcher plants (Snyder, 2012)

the abundance and breadth of public lands. The soils, diverse geomorphology and a warm, moist climate allow for many unique species of plants to thrive. In addition, the majority of public land is routinely managed by prescribed fire, which

passive in nature, such as the **Trailwalker Program**, which challenges hikers to complete as many as 50+ trails across the state. Visitors can also explore many of the forested areas by bicycle, horse, or canoe/kayak.



State Aquatic Presi

The Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail (CT) is Florida's longest and most ambitious paddling trail. The CT is a 1,515 mile sea kayaking adventure that includes every Florida coastal habitat type, from barrier island dune systems to salt marshes and mangroves. Numerous historical sites and natural points of interest are accessible along the trail, as well as colorful fishing communities and urban centers. The trail passes through the Forgotten Coast in Segment 4 from St. Joseph Peninsula State Park to St. George Island State Park for 57 miles.



Cypress National Preserve in the Everglades. The trail passes through areas managed by more than two dozen public land managing agencies, including 70+ miles within the Apalachicola National Forest.

The Florida Department of Transportation's **National Scenic Byways Program** recognizes roads having outstanding scenic, historic, cultural, natural, recreational and archaeological qualities. Be sure to check out the numerous recreation spots along the Apalachee Savannahs and Big Bend Scenic Byways, which travel a combined 250 miles around the Forgotten Coast region.



CENTRAL FLORIDA PANHANDLE

DEP's Division of Recreation and Parks

manages the 174 parks, trails and historic sites within Florida's State Park system. Besides providing hundreds of thousands of acres for public recreational use, the state park system is the largest of public historic properties in Florida. Be sure not to miss some of these parks in the Panhandle: Torreya, St. Joseph Bay Peninsula, St. George Island, Bald Point and Ochlockonee.

Recreational fishing can be enjoyed in both freshwater and saltwater habitats in the Apalachicola River System. Common freshwater species taken include bass, catfish, bream and other panfish. Flounder, redfish, trout, pompano, tarpon and mackerel are some of the saltwater species. Management of recreational fishing activity is enforced by FWC regulations. Florida residents and visitors need a Florida hunting freshwater fishing and/or saltwater fishing license unless they are a member of one of the exempt groups (see website). FWC also manages **public hunting** on more than 5.5 million acres in the wildlife management system and cooperates with other land managers on regulations. Some

deer, turkey, dove, quail, wild hog and waterfowl. FWC's Hunting Handbook summarizes the hunting regulations for private and public lands (http://myfwc. com/hunting/regulations).



Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve • 108 Island Drive Eastpoint, FL 32328 • Phone: 850-670-7700

Safety Tips for the Trail **On Every Hike and Paddle**

• Bring plenty of water and food. One gallon of water is suggested per person per day for overnight trips. For day trips, ½ gallon per person is recommended. Consider bringing these essentials: map and compass/GPS,

sunscreen, sunglasses, hat, whistle, bug spray and first aid kit.

Land Exploration

 Know your route and capabilities. Be aware of the trail terrain, length and special features.

• Stay on the trail and do not take shortcuts. The trail has been designed to minimize destruction of surrounding vegetation and to prevent erosion

• Leave the trail or campsite better than when you found it!

Water Exploration

 Know waterway conditions. Check tides, winds and water levels before you get on the water. • Wear a personal flotation device (PFD). Florida law

requires a readily accessible and wearable Coast Guard approved PFD with attached whistle for each occupant. Children under the age of 6 must wear PFDs.



High Bluff Coastal Hiking Trail

 $R \quad o \quad a \quad \overline{d}$

Encountering Wildlife Simple preventive measures and awareness can



• Ticks, chiggers, biting flies, fire ants, spiders and mosquitoes are very common in Florida. Cover up with clothing and utilize bug spray if necessary. Never feed wild animals. Besides being

dangerous, it is also illegal to feed some animals, such as alligators and bears. Look and listen for

venomous snakes. Pick up a snake guide to learn how to identify them! Watch where you step and be

careful when picking up firewood. Do not approach wildlife you may see on the trail

and be careful not to disturb their habitat. Learn to identify and avoid irritating plants including poison ivy, cacti, cat briars and sawgrass.

 Have fun and enjoy the wonderful diversity of plants and animals Florida has to offer!



You are Living in Bear Country

 When camping, the easiest way to prevent attracting a bear is to eliminate or secure anything that has a scent including food, toothpaste, deodorant, bug repellent and sunscreen.

 Bag your food in an airtight, odor-containing bag or canister. Hang this container away from your campsite at least 10 feet above the ground and 4 feet from the tree. • Commit your tent to being a food-free zone.

• To report a bear problem anywhere in the state, 24 hours a day, call the toll-free Wildlife Alert Hotline: 888-404-FWCC.

corner of this map or by visiting http://apalachicolablueway.com/blueway_maps.html.

Deposit solid human waste in catholes dug 6 to 8 inches deep, at least 200 feet from water, camp and trails. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished. 4. Leave what you find Preserve the past: Look but do not touch cultural and historic structures, artifacts and sites.

Avoid introducing or transporting invasive, exotic species by

removing seeds/debris from gear, boots and boats before and 5. Minimize campfire impacts Use alternatives to campfires during periods of high fire danger

Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them.

Conserving Our Resources

Before exploring any area, check for closures and fire restrictions.

Use designated camping sites or pick a site where vegetation is

Protect riparian areas by camping at least 200 feet from lakes

Pack it in, pack it out! Inspect your campsite before you leave for

Practicing "Leave No Trace" Ethics

Plan your route and tell a friend.

2. Camp on durable surfaces

3. Dispose of waste properly

trash, spilled foods and gear.

1. Prepare

and streams.

Use existing fire rings and never leave a campfire unattended. Collect dead and down wood only for campfires. Make sure it is fully extinguished before leaving the area – cold to the touch!

6. Respect wildlife

Treat wildlife with respect and enjoy viewing animals from a distance. See "Encountering Wildlife" section for more information. 7. Be considerate of other visitors

Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experiences by being courteous.

Apalachicola

Map 1 - Little St. George Island

Little St. George Island is open year-round to the public for beach activities, fishing, hiking, paddling and primitive camping. The island is accessible by boat only and access points include West Pass, Marshall House/Government Dock and Sike's Cut.

(14 days max). First come,

first served at most sites;

at Camel, Wright and Hickory

Landing: Online reservations

for Camel and Wright Lake

available at Recreation.gov

Red-cockaded

woodpeckers, gopher

tortoises, Apalachicola

Rd 123 sites near Sumatra

55 miles designated

(Leon County, permit

required); Biking allowed

on multi-use roads

Freshwater fishing available

Ranger Station

850-643-2282

cpansive salt marshes; 5 designated GFBT sites

it 4 on St. George Island (Fort Gadsden, Wright Lake

a designated GFBT site Co Rd 22 Pond and Forest

ulf Beach (LSGI); Biking Off-Highway Vehicle trails

n tract is managed by under Apalachicola WMA

/EA regulations. Dove the general gun season,

d eagles, wading birds,

ite and brown pelicans,

miles of undeveloped

astpoint, FL 32328

Nature

Observation

Special

Opportunities

a do the

Hunting and

Fishing

\(\frac{1}{\sigma} \)

Contact

Scan QR code

for more

information

Recreation Area;

Reservation required

(free) and year-round;

throughout the WMA

(on river sandbars and in

floodplain)

populated by many bird,

reptile, amphibian and

Biking allowed

on multi-use roads

ing on the Lower River Hunting managed by FWC Hunting managed by FWC Hunting managed by FWC Hunting managed by FWC

under Apalachicola River

WMA regulations;

81 Water Management Drive

850-539-5999

Electric hookups only available Dispersed camping allowed

une and swale habitats, and pitcher plant habitats; as tupelo and cypress trees (Cash Bayou, Sand Beach,

nting allowed on LSGI. camping is allowed only in Freshwater fishing available Hunting activity generally



C o r r i d o rMap 2 - ANERR Nature Center

Gap Point and 1 youth with refuge hunts, by ermit, are on the river banks with group camp; Reservation at 2 designated hunt camps canoe/kayak/small boat

> St. Vincent Island is a designated GFBT site

are available year-round tours available; 9 miles of Off-Highway Vehicle trails

undeveloped Gulf Beach;

Biking allowed

on multi-use roads

permits for 3 hunts

permits for Refuge hunts,

and hunts managed NWR

staff. Freshwater and

saltwater fishing available

around St. Vincent Island

and from 14 mile parcel

St. Vincent National

Apalachicola, FL 32329

(fee) required for all

State Park is a designated

Biking allowed

on multi-use roads

No hunting allowed.

1900 E. Gulf Beach Drive

850-927-2111

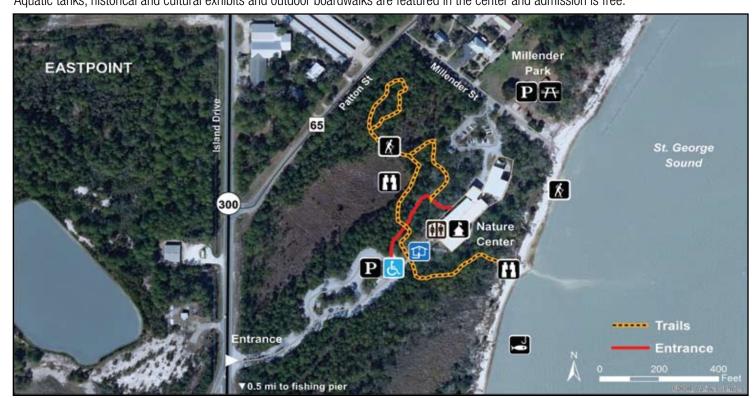
Events and ranger programs Seasonal guided tram

bald eagles, river turtles and deer, hogs, river otters, dolphins, sea turtles, barrier bald eagles, sambar deer,

osprey and wetland birds island dune and beach

under Box R regulations; Saltwater fishing available

The Nature Center is open Tuesday through Saturday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and is located at 108 Island Drive in Eastpoint.



Map 3 - Unit 4 on St. George Island

The Unit 4 (Fast Hole) tract is onen year-round to the public and is easily accessed at the end of 6th Street East on St. George Island.



To Recreation

Map 4 - Apalachicola River Paddling Opportunities

There are a variety of paddling trips for all ages, skill levels and interests in the Apalachicola River and Bay Basin. For detailed trip planning, including maps, campsites, points of interest and amenities, refer to the Apalachicola River Blueway website by scanning the QR code in the

