

Orange Creek Basin Management Action Plan Adopted by the DEP

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced today the adoption of the Orange Creek Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP). The Action Plan developed in partnership with the City of Gainesville, Alachua and Marion Counties, Gainesville Regional Utilities, St Johns River Water Management District, and other state and local watershed stakeholders is a road map to restoring and protecting water quality in the Orange Creek Basin.

Where is the Orange Creek Basin located?

The basin is located in Alachua, Marion, and Putnam Counties. It is a tributary basin of the Ocklawaha River and includes the following waterbodies:

- Orange Lake, Lochloosa Lake, Cross Creek, Orange Creek, Newnans Lake, Hatchet Creek.
- Lake Wauberg, Alachua Sink and Paynes Prairie.
- Sweetwater Branch, Hogtown Creek, and Tumblin Creek.

This BMAP was developed under a state-wide approach that relies on local, regional and state interests to identify management actions to restore water quality in a basin. Similar efforts are underway in other parts of the state.

Why was a BMAP needed in the Orange Creek Basin?

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection designated that the water quality of the Orange Creek Basin should be suitable for recreational use and for the propagation and maintenance of a healthy, well-balanced population of fish and wildlife. DEP determined that Orange Lake, Newnans Lake, Lake Wauberg and Alachua Sink did not support these uses due to excessive amounts of nutrients and Hogtown Creek, Tumblin Creek, and Sweetwater Branch did not support these uses due to high levels of fecal coliform bacteria. Of particular concern was the impact of poor water quality in Sweetwater Branch and Alachua Sink on the Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park.

Who was involved in developing the Upper Ocklawaha Basin Management Action Plan?

- Local governments: Gainesville, McIntosh, Alachua and Marion Counties, and Alachua County Health Department.
- Regional governments: St. Johns River Water Management District
- State agencies: Department of Environmental Protection, Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (Office of Agriculture Water Policy and Division of Forestry), Department of Transportation, and the University of Florida.
- Local government citizen advisory boards: Gainesville Water Management Committee and Alachua County Environmental Protection Advisory Committee,
- Community and Environmental Groups: Women for Wise Growth, Sustainable Alachua County, Suwannee-St. Johns Sierra Club.
- Private timber interests: Florida Forestry Association, Rayonier, and Plum Creek.

In 2003, and 2006 for Alachua Sink, the DEP adopted water quality restoration targets, called Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDLs)

to help stakeholders identify actions for controlling pollutant discharges. This BMAP is the implementation plan that identifies these actions.

Who was involved?

The Orange Creek BMAP represents a collaborative effort by local, regional, and state interests; elected officials and citizens; and private interests. These interests are committed to a phased approach for reducing pollutant discharges to the seven impaired waterbodies in this basin. The BMAP includes a strong plan of management actions to address the sources of fecal coliforms to the streams and nutrients to the lakes and Alachua Sink. It also includes plans for additional research to improve the understanding of the basin's aquatic resources, refine the identification of sources, and identify additional measures needed to meet water quality standards.

What will the BMAP accomplish?

Reducing the discharges of pollutants into these waterbodies will help achieve water quality standards and their associated public benefits, such as fishing and other recreational uses. An adaptive management approach will be used during BMAP implementation to identify and make modifications to the BMAP when circumstances change or monitoring indicates that a more effective strategy is needed.

This local and regional effort fostered the sharing of ideas, information, and resources while developing the plan. The participants' commitment to confer with and support each other in their efforts to restore and protect surface waters across the basin will continue during implementation of the plan, including follow-up monitoring and analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of management actions.

Specific actions in the BMAP include continued improvement in stormwater treatment and control programs, better identification of sources followed by actions that will reduce fecal coliforms in the creeks and nutrient discharges into the lakes and Alachua Sink, better stormwater controls for active silviculture and agriculture lands, more stringent local ordinances to control pollution, and an ongoing program of public and private education and outreach.

Where can you find more information?

The Orange Creek Basin Management Plan is available at:

<ftp://ftp.dep.state.fl.us/pub/water/BMAP/OrangeCreek>

and <http://www.gainesvillecreeks.org>

To learn more about the activities of DEP's partners in the Orange Creek Basin, follow the links to:

Gainesville Clean Water Partnership: <http://www.gainesvillecreeks.org>

SJRWMD: <http://www.sjrwmd.com/orangecreek/index.html>

Marion County Clean Water Program:
http://www.marioncountyfl.org/EN411/EN_CleanWaterProgram.htm

Alachua County Health Department:
<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/chdAlachua/environmental/environmental.htm>

Gainesville Regional Utilities: <http://www.gru.com/OurEnvironment/default.jsp>

Alachua County Environmental Protection Department:
<http://www.co.alachua.fl.us/government/depts/epd/>

Gainesville Public Works: <http://cityofgainesville.org/pubworks/stormwater/>

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Office of Agricultural Water Policy: <http://www.floridaagwaterpolicy.com/> and for the Division of Forestry: <http://www.fl-dof.com/>

Women for Wise Growth: <http://www.womenforwisegrowth.org/>

Florida Forestry Association: <http://www.floridaforest.org/>