

Oklawaha River

AQUATIC PRESERVE

"The Oklawaha and Silver Rivers offer us a unique glimpse into our past that must be protected for future generations to cherish."

Jeff Sowards, Aquatic Preserve Manager

Key Accomplishments

- As a member of the Silver River Working Group, we were able to successfully sponsor a key piece of land to the Florida Forever Program to provide protection for the Silver River recharge area.
- As a member of the Marion County Water Resources Stakeholder Group, preserve staff helped to draft a proposal for land use regulations for development within the critical recharge areas of Marion County. The proposal was presented to the Marion County Commission. Local officials are now recognizing the need for protection of critical spring recharge area.
- The Marion County Springs Festival was co-chaired by the aquatic preserve. The three day event brought public and private entities together to educate the community about issues that effect our springs and ground water and to promote public stewardship. Approximately 2000 people of all ages attended the festival to view over 30 interactive booths and to hear presentations from state and federal experts on issues that affect our Florida springs.
- Programs to educate Marion and Citrus County students in aquatic ecology are also conducted by the aquatic preserve throughout the year. Over 500 students from area schools were given educational presentations on wildlife ecology during field trips by aquatic preserve Staff.



The Silver River is home to an unexpected guest - the rhesus monkey.

Project Spotlight

The Local Connection

Being a member of the Silver River Working Group and the Marion County Water Resources Stakeholders Group enables the



Green heron

Oklawaha River Aquatic Preserve to be on the cutting edge of local issues that affect the preserve. Land use and water resource decisions that significantly impact the Silver and Oklawaha Rivers are made on the local level.

Through this partnership, the aquatic preserve can provide input to local and county officials. Thanks to the working group's application sponsorship and

recommendations, significant parcels of land have been purchased (Selden property) or added to the Florida Forever Program to protect the surrounding spring-shed of the preserve. The stakeholders group recommendations on land use changes within the two and ten year recharge area of Silver Springs are being considered by Marion County to protect water quality and quantity.

Oklawaha River Aquatic Preserve

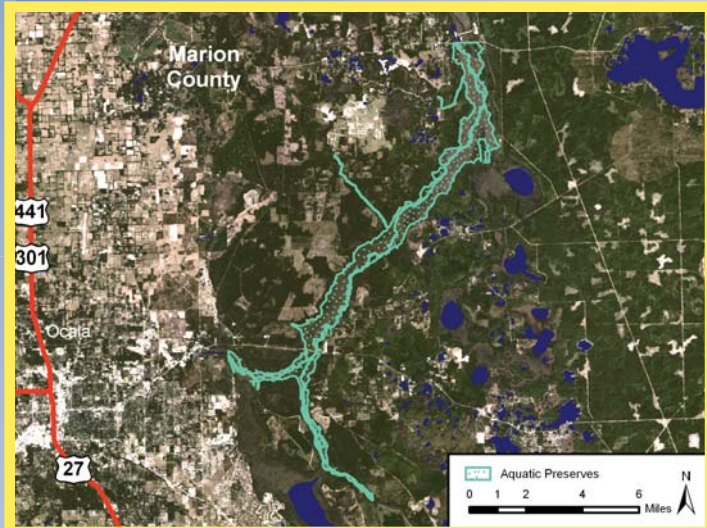


Location:

Marion County

Acreage:

4,600 acres of sovereign submerged lands



Local Contact:

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Aquatic Preserve Facts:

- Because of its location in the Central Highlands and its protection from geological fluctuations in sea level, the Oklawaha River is one of the oldest rivers in Florida.
- The dark-water Oklawaha, spring-run Silver River and their flood plain swamp support a diverse natural system of flora and fauna.
- The preserve is home to 110 species and 12 families of fishes.
- This area is rich in cultural resources; human habitation dates back to 7500 B.C.
- 43% of the federally listed threatened or endangered species rely directly or indirectly on wetlands for their survival. (USFWS)



Cypress wetlands



Young alligator basking



Cormorants



Red-bellied turtles lined up



Cardinal flowers among the cypress knees



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