

# Wekiva River

# AQUATIC PRESERVE

*"The Wekiva's place in Central Florida's past and future is truly remarkable. Where else in the nation can you find a spring-fed river beginning in the midst of a rapidly urbanizing area that leads like an ever expanding path out of the city and into a hundred miles of wilderness? Whether it is the Black Bear, the mournful cry of the Limpkin, or the happy voices of children in a canoe on a sunny day, the sounds and sights of the Wekiva will enrich the lives of countless generations yet to come if we are wise enough today to do what is necessary to preserve this ecosystem."*

*Charles Lee, Director of Advocacy, Florida Audubon Society*

## Key Accomplishments

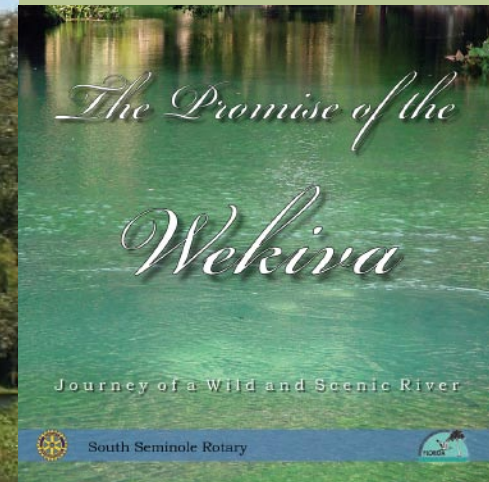
- Woods to Water - Aquatic preserve education staff began a hands-on environmental education program that showcases the beauty and diversity of the Wekiva River ecosystem. The program includes a one-mile interactive hike through the Lower Wekiva River Preserve State Park to the Wekiva River at Katie's Landing.
- The Wekiva River Aquatic Preserve team supported the Central Florida Freshwater Turtle Study Group by obtaining funding totaling \$6,800 to purchase new microchip tagging equipment.
- Data from nearly 5,000 turtles captured and/or recaptured during a ten-year freshwater turtle study in the Wekiva River Aquatic Preserve was used to provide scientific support for the 2009 Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission statewide ban on commercial harvesting of turtles.
- Aquatic preserve staff completed a long term project with FWC Invasive Plant Section that reduced nuisance cattails in the Wekiva River from over 20 acres to less than 3 acres.



## Project Spotlight

### Wekiva River Promise Initiative

A myriad of complex interrelated issues affect the Wekiva Basin. These include decreased springflow, proliferation of exotic plants and animals and increased nutrient loading from sources such as fertilizer from farms, home lawns, and golf courses, wastewater from sprayfields and septic tank drain fields, and reclaimed water.



Wekiva River Aquatic Preserve partnered with South Seminole Rotary on a new education and awareness initiative "The Promise of the Wekiva". The program aims to increase public awareness of the ecological value of the Wekiva River Basin and encourage personal stewardship through individual actions. The

Promise Committee has presented information to local homeowners' associations and is creating a full color 40-page magazine that will generate awareness of the Wekiva River Basin, provide information on natural resources and recreation opportunities in the Wekiva Basin, highlight the challenges facing the Wekiva and provide solutions that residents and river enthusiasts can adopt to meet these challenges.

# Wekiva River Aquatic Preserve

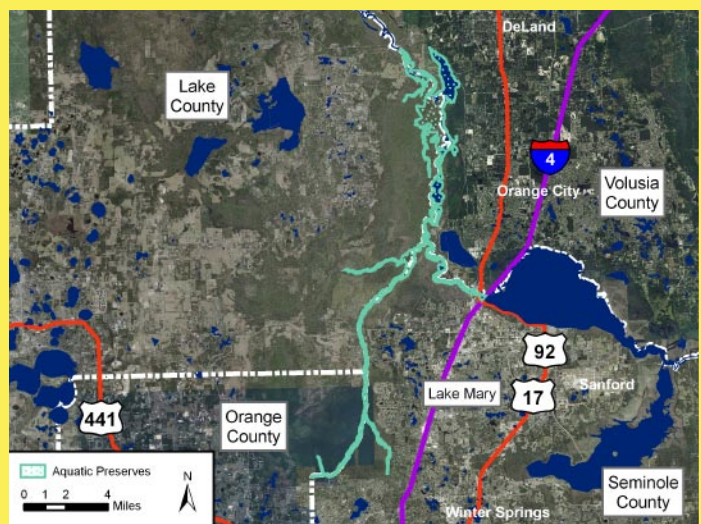


## Location:

Central Florida. The Wekiva River, Middle St. Johns River, portions of Blackwater Creek, Little Wekiva River, and Rock Springs Run in Orange, Lake, Seminole, and Volusia counties

## Acreage:

19,000 acres of sovereign submerged lands



## Local Contact:

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## Aquatic Preserve Facts:

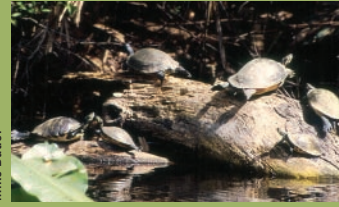
- The Wekiva, a State Canoe Trail and Outstanding Florida Water, is only one of two Florida rivers to receive the federal designation of Wild and Scenic River.
- The entire reach of the St. Johns River within the aquatic preserve is a federally designated American Heritage River. Other portions of the St. Johns are designated by the State of Florida as a Manatee Sanctuary and an Outstanding Florida Water.
- The Wekiva and Middle St. Johns River support extensive floodplains, but also have significant spring fed components.
- Wildlife is abundant, including several endangered and threatened species such as the West Indian manatee, Florida black bear, wood stork, bald eagle, and sandhill crane.
- Several species typically found in marine environments such as blue crab, stingray, and needlefish inhabit the St. Johns River, and occasionally visit the Wekiva.
- The springheads at Wekiwa and Rock Springs are two of the few places in central Florida where limestone that comprises Florida's underground aquifer is exposed and can be easily observed.
- Most of the aquatic preserve is located in a region of ecological transition between two climate zones.
- The range of temperate zone plants overlaps the northern limit of many tropical species, creating an area of high floral diversity.



Wood storks nesting on the Wekiva River



Clear sand bottom along Rock Springs Run



Mike Butler

Turtles require basking time to maintain their shells



Alligators thrive along the St. Johns River



Swamp hibiscus

