



Withlacoochee Aquatic Restoration
W.A.R., Inc.
A 501 (c)(3) nonprofit corporation
Spring 2024

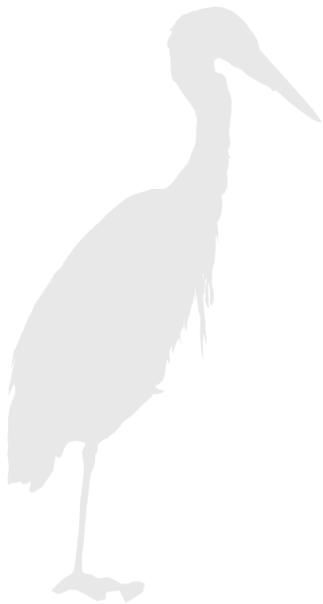
Upstream Downstream

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OUR MISSION

To implement civic action and to promote the common good of residents of the community with a focus on public awareness and responsible stewardship of regional water sources, the basis for all the natural systems that define Florida's Nature Coast



Progress Report – Close, but no cigar

Finally, our meeting was rescheduled to meet with the Army Corp of Engineers staff and Congresswoman Cammack staff on April 22nd and then in a blink of an eye we were advised it would have to be rescheduled. We had hoped to advise you of the results of the meeting in this newsletter but as the old baseball saying goes "say it ain't so Joe". So now we are back in the batters circle waiting to be called to bat. It has been 8 months since our initial scheduled meeting with both parties and all I can say is time is on our side.



Since we are a Non Governmental Organization (NGO), our lead to reclaim our Withlacoochee River must be passed to the elected officials of Yankeetown and Inglis as this project will require Government entities to move forward. W.A.R will act as support for both municipalities by providing

assistance with our direct involvement of studying the documents that confirm the degradation of the Lower Withlacoochee and the impounded Lake.

There are now three focus points that the communities will request for restoration.

1. Repair, modify, or replace the dams and spillways to allow restoration of historic peak flows and future draw downs of Lake Rousseau.
2. Minimize herbicidal weed control in Lake Rousseau and support draw downs and other efforts to clean the lake bottom and improve fishing habitat.
3. Support improved flood control for the Lower Withlacoochee River.

It has been over 60 years since the construction of the structures for the barge canal and the start of creating a local environmental disaster that if left to our Federal and State agencies may never be corrected unless our communities speak up and continue pushing for resolution.

W.A.R Directors change but others step up to continue the battle. We will prevail as long as the communities and our residents persist in getting the job done.

Jack H Schofield II
President, W.A.R

Shame on Them!

Due to a significant decline in the Lower Withlacoochee River, W.A.R., Inc. (501.C3) contracted to have a study done to confirm our perceptions and it was done with the collaboration of Florida Department of Environmental Protection and our water district. The findings were rather disconcerting, and the recommendations consistent with three other studies done by the same agencies.

The primary problem? When the Army Corps of Engineers constructed the Cross Florida Barge Canal transit and water control structures they eliminated peak flows to the Lower River. The maximum discharge over the dam and spillway are in the neighborhood of 6,000 cubic foot per second. The maximum flow to the Lower River is 1450 cubic feet per second. Results? The Lower River is little more than a basin for collecting sediments. Such things inhibit natural aquatic life significantly. For example, there is virtually no aquatic vegetation in the river segment below Lake Rousseau. Likewise, seeing a fisherman in the river is a very rare thing as well.

The estimated cost of the recent investigation was more than \$340,000, most of which was donated by the communities and residents of Inglis and Yankeetown. Sample collection spanned three years and to the best of our knowledge, this was the first investigation that examined biology and chemistry in the Lower River.

The state's response as well as that of our political representatives has been nil, and we have been knocking on their door for nearly three years.

Bottom line, the state of our river is a huge economic kick in the crotch for the communities. Almost forgot, it is also designated as Outstanding Florida Waters. Apparently, the state really doesn't care.

It is a serious problem with a straightforward solution. The Army Corps did this and they should fix it.

Dan Hilliard, W.A.R. Director

Outstanding Florida Waters ?

Yes, the Lower Withlacoochee River is so designated by the state and as such requires a higher level of protection. If that makes you scratch your noggin, please know you are not alone.

Over the years since our petition for such status was granted there have been at least four studies related to our current problems and they all have made what are essentially the same recommendations. They say, in very succinct terms, "Restore the flow!" The earliest report I'm aware of was published in 1989. They were done by various state agencies, mostly by contract to private firms. Ours was so done as well, the "minor" difference being that we studied pollutants, flow volume and biological communities, and did so with hands on assistance by a SWFWMD employee and FDEP for analytical work on submitted samples over a three-year span.

Yes Virginia, our river is a mess. The good news is that it can be restored to its once glorious state! Question of the day however; will this happen? Based on the responses we have received over the last 2-3 years in discussion with state agencies and political representatives, it does not appear

the attack will occur within the next few days.

I have to ask myself, why? The state has been gifting several groups that are cleaning up Crystal River, Homosassa River with a few million over the last few years and they are doing well with the projects. Problem I see with that effort is that the improvements will degrade in time due to subtle issues that caused the problems in the first place. Specifically, the spring flows are significantly reduced due to groundwater pumping and the aquifer suffers negatively from the plethora of septic systems in Citrus County. To be fair, the state has stepped in and mandated large-scale conversion from septic systems to municipal sewers, but it will take many years for that to be completed. In polite terms I ask if the hard work being done at those spring fed rivers is a good investment or are they just mowing the lawn in a manner of speaking. I don't know the answer to that, but am skeptical nonetheless. The fix needed for our river is a one item menu. Reconnect the river and let the water roll! One and done as they say.

Water resources, both fresh and saltwater, are the largest contributor to Florida's annual gross product and distant second place is agriculture. We need to restore these systems for the benefit of the residents of Florida as well as future generations. I have witnessed the demise of our waters over the course of my 75 years and it is a sad thing we have allowed to happen.

It needs to STOP! And we also need to unite and fix these problems for the benefit of future generations. Put the politics aside and do the right thing!

Dan Hilliard, W.A.R. Director

Sample Letter for You to Customize and Send

Below is a sample letter for you to send to our Florida State Representative and Federal Representatives. Please take a moment to do so. It will only cost you a stamp!

Honorable [example: Keith Perry,]

The citizens of [insert name or town] request your attention and action to correct the problems created on the Lower Withlacoochee River when the failed Cross Florida Barge Canal was abandoned. In the 55 years since the Lower Withlacoochee River was cut off from historical maximum flows by 75%, the health of the Lower Withlacoochee River has deteriorated, and it continues to do so today.

The citizens and residents of this area depend on this designated Outstanding Florida Waterway for much of our livelihood. Having a healthy river provides jobs and economic opportunity as well as recreational opportunities. In its current condition we are not maximizing the value this water body can provide for the local communities, for the county, and for the State of Florida. In addition, reduced flow impacts the river channel, making it smaller over time and less able to handle flood waters that result from storm surge in named storms.

We are requesting that as our representative you work to commit the State of Florida and the Federal Government to correct the problems, by correcting the situation at the Inglis Dam and Inglis Bypass Spillway to allow peak historical flows to be returned to the Lower River. The Withlacoochee is a designated Outstanding Water Way and deserves to be maintained as such. "Water is Life" and without the needed repairs and restoration, the river system will fail and our communities will be destroyed by salt water intrusion and increased flood risk.

Respectfully

Suggestions for Customization

You can utilize the sample above and modify the first sentence: "I (or We) request your attention...". Better yet, describe your very own experience witnessing the degradation of our River. When you were a kid, was this river clear, were there abundant game fish, turtles, dolphins, manatee, otters, eel grass and other signs of a healthy ecosystem? And what do you see today? Cause your voice to be heard!

Send us a copy too. We'll consider it for inclusion in the next Newsletter. warinc.directors@gmail.com

State and Federal Elected Officials Address

Contact	Title	Address					
Kat Cammack	Congresswoman District 3	2421 Rayburn House Office Building Washington D.C 20515					
Jeannie Rickman (Aide)	Economic Development Coordinator & Constituent Advocate	3301 SW 34TH Circle Suite 402 Ocala FL 34475					
Ruth Clark (Aide)	Director of Operations						
Gus Bilirakis	Congressman	2306 Rayburn House Office Building Washington D.C 20515					
Karen Mayer (Aide)	Director of Strategic Operations						
David Halbstein	District Aide						
Keith Perry	State Senator Represents Levy Co	405 Senate Building 404 South Monroe St Tallahassee FL 32399-1100					
Anthony Serge							
Damon Vitale	Legislative Aide						
Suzanne McGuire	Legislative Aide						
Gigi Hernandez	Legislative Aide						
Blaise Ingolia	State Senator Represents Citrus County	310 Senate Building 404 South Monroe St Tallahassee FL 32399-1100					
Hannah Christian	Legislative Aide						
Jordyn Ivie	Legislative Aide						
Chuck Clemmons	State Representative Levy County	422 The Capitol 402 South Monroe St Tallahassee FL 32399-1300					
Mike Murtha	Legislative Aide						
Robin Steele	District Aide						
Dr. Ralph Massullo	State Representative Citrus County	308 House Office Building 402 South Monroe Tallassee FL 32399-1300					
Adelle Hembree	Legislative Aide						
Dawn Faherty	District Aide						
Col James Booth	USACE	701 San Marco Blvd Jacksonville FL 32207					
Edward C Smith	Florida DEP Eco System Restoration	3900 Commonwealth Blvd Tallahassee FL 32399-3000					
Kevin O'donnell	Florida DEP Eco Restoration						
Chuck Hatcher	State Parks Director						
Robert Yero	District 3 Bureau Chief						
Jennifer Roberts	District 3 Asst Bureau Chief						
Mickey Thomason	Park Manager IV						

Jennette Seachrist	SWFWMD District Director of Resource Management Division	7601 US HWY 301 Tampa Fl 33637-6759				
Mark Fulkerson	Chief Professional Engineer					
Cara Martin	District's Government and Community Affairs Office Chief					
Desiree Mills	Levy BOCC District 3	310 School St Bronson Fl 32621				
Jeff Kinard	Citrus BOCC Distric 4					
Steve Schwing	Mayor Inglis	PO Drawer 429 Inglis Fl 34449				
Eric Erkel	Mayor Yankeetown	2511 Harmony Lane Yankeetown Fl 34498				
Elected Officials Highlighted in Yellow						
Key Elected Officials Staff Aide in green						

Vacant Position

W.A.R. currently has a vacant board position we are eager to fill. If you desire to help us restore our river, please contact Jack Schofield 352-586-2255 during normal business hours.



*Hang in there, we are fighting the good fight!
Photo courtesy of Ken Rohling.*



*Photography by
Captain Andy Fischer*

Sunrise from Bird Creek Bridge by Andy Fischer.

Withlacoochee Aquatic Restoration (W.A.R., Inc.)
Preserving Our Nature Coast

Membership Application New Member Renewal

Please Print

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE _____ **ZIP CODE** _____

TELEPHONE _____ **CELL** _____

E-MAIL _____

YOUR PRIVACY WILL BE PROTECTED, ADDRESSES ARE NEVER SOLD

Indicate Membership Level

Individual \$30

Family \$40

Life \$1,200

How Can You Help?

Fundraising

Publicity

Events

Area of Expertise _____

Additional Contribution

\$ _____

Make Checks Payable to: W.A.R., Inc.

Mail To: PO Box 350

Inglis, FL 34449-0350

PO Box 350
501(c)(3) non-profit

Inglis, Florida 34449
warinc.directors@gmail.com

352-527-0023
war-inc.org

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Office Use

Cash/Ck # _____ Date _____ Posted _____ Thank You Given _____ Sent _____

W.A.R., Inc.,
Withlacochee Aquatic Restoration
P.O. Box 350
Inglis, FL 34449

Officers:
President - Jack Schofield
Vice President - Vacant Position
Treasurer - Phillip Sprinkle
Secretary - Laurie Jagers

Directors:
Ursula Schwuttke
Dan Hilliard
Dave Huffman
John Westers

Contact Us
warinc.directors@gmail.com
or visit us online: www.warinc.org

Withlacochee Aquatic Restoration (W.A.R., Inc.) is a 501(c) (3), nonprofit charitable organization. Incorporated in 1984, our underlying principle is promoting the social welfare and common good of the residents of our communities. To that end, W.A.R., Inc. coordinates with government and non-government agencies and groups to preserve and restore the quality of the Withlacochee River and associated ecosystems.

W.A.R., Inc. is responsible for the designation of the Withlacochee River as an "Outstanding Florida Waterway," and contemplates future actions to provide an umbrella of Federal protection over the river basin and associated estuary.

Withlacochee Aquatic Restoration, Inc. is committed to improving state decision making and oversight practices that continue to contribute to degradation and depletion of increasingly scarce potable groundwater that is the foundation for the survival of our communities.