

Middle Suwannee River Area Watershed

Florida

Background

The focus area watersheds are located in north central Florida approximately halfway between the cities of Jacksonville and Tallahassee along the Middle Suwannee River in Suwannee and Lafayette counties. The Suwannee River originates in the Okefenokee Swamp in Georgia and flows through North Central Florida for 245 miles before it empties into the Gulf of Mexico.

The Middle Suwannee suffers from water quality concerns over nutrients, sediment and pathogens. The river acts as a filter for pollutants entering the Suwannee River, which ultimately enters the Gulf of Mexico.

The hydrogeology of the area is of karstic nature with closed basins, stream to sink drainage, numerous springs, and an unconfined aquifer with a high degree of recharge potential overlain by sandy, well-drained soils. Major land uses are cropland, forestlands and pastureland, with cropland being dominated by row crop agriculture. This area is extremely vulnerable to ground water contamination.

In addition, the Suwannee River and its floodplain provide some of the most productive wildlife habitats in Florida. It supports at least 54 species of fish, 39 species of amphibians, 73 species of reptiles, 232 species of birds, and 39 species of mammals.

Goals / Objectives

This initiative will reduce organics, sedimentation, and pollution from agricultural operations in the focus area, and as a result, reduce their deposition into the Suwannee River. Ultimately, this will reduce sediments and pollutants that would otherwise end up in the Gulf of Mexico.

Old Grassy Lake

HUC # 031102050203

Allon Lake

HUC # 031102050305

Blue Lake

HUC # 031102050402

Pickel Lake

HUC # 031102050405



Resource Concern	Total Acres Needing Treatment
Water Quality – Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Ground Water	32,000
Water Quality - Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water	8,000
Water Quantity –Aquifer Overdraft	5,000
Water Quantity – Inefficient Water use on Irrigated Land	5,000
Soil Condition – Sheet and Rill Erosion	3,000

State Proposal - Florida

Actions

The initiative will focus on providing technical and financial assistance to address water quality and soil erosion concerns on lands managed as confined livestock operations (dairy and poultry) and croplands.

Practices will include:

- Nutrient Management
- Integrated Pest Management
- Irrigation Water Management
- Irrigation System, Sprinkler
- Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till/Strip Till/Direct Seed
- Residue and Tillage Management, Mulch Till
- Cover Crop
- Heavy Use Area Protection
- Waste Storage Facility
- Composting Facility
- Irrigation Pipeline

Outcomes and Impacts

This initiative will enhance NRCS' ongoing conservation efforts to reduce organics, sedimentation and pollution from agricultural operations in the designated watersheds, and thus improve the water quality of the Suwannee River, whose waters flow into the Gulf of Mexico. If this initiative is funded, 40% of the nutrients and/or organics, and 50% of the sheet and rill erosion identified will be eliminated from the watershed.



Conservation Tillage in Focus Area



Dairy: Heavy Use Area Protection

Partners

Suwannee and Lafayette Soil and Water Conservation Districts will provide technical assistance and leadership in setting priorities for conservation measures to be implemented in the selected watersheds.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will provide technical assistance to program participants and NRCS on biological recommendations, and planning assistance dealing with threatened and endangered species and their habitat.

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services will help with outreach and provide technical assistance to landowners within the selected watersheds.

Suwannee River Water Management District will provide resources to help with outreach, continued monitoring of ground and surface water, and permitting.

Florida Forest Service will provide technical assistance and outreach to Non-Industrial Private Forest (NIPF) landowners.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection will provide assistance in monitoring ground and surface water.

Florida Cooperative Extension Service will provide assistance in conducting educational workshops and outreach to agriculture producers.