

# National Water Quality Initiative Fact Sheet

## Florida: Overview

Through the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering financial and technical assistance to farmers, ranchers and forest landowners interested in improving water quality and aquatic habitats in priority watersheds with impaired streams. NRCS will help producers implement conservation and management practices through a systems approach to control and trap nutrient and manure runoff. Qualified producers will receive assistance for installing conservation practices such as cover crops, filter strips and terraces. For over 75 years, NRCS has provided agricultural producers with assistance to implement voluntary conservation practices that protect natural resources while maintaining production and profits.

## Florida

### Priority Watersheds

Florida agricultural producers in three watersheds will receive targeted funding to improve water quality. Through this effort, eligible producers in **Deep Creek, Clarks Creek and Little Scurlock Creek** watersheds will invest in voluntary conservation actions to help provide cleaner water for their neighbors and communities.

Deep Creek and Clarks Creek are within the Lower St. Johns River Basin. The St. Johns River, one of the few major rivers in the nation that flows north, contains both freshwater and saltwater wetlands. Tidal marshes and creeks provide important nursery areas for saltwater commercial fisheries. The predominant land uses in the basin are urban and developed, upland forest, wetlands, silviculture, and agriculture. Agriculture is concentrated in Flagler, St. Johns, and Putnam Counties in what is known as the



*Potatoes and cabbage are the primary crops in the Deep Creek Watershed.*

Photo by St. Johns River Water Management District

Tri-County Agricultural Area (TCAA). Potatoes and cabbage are the primary crops. Stormwater runoff containing fertilizers, sediments and pesticides is a major concern. Little Scurlock Creek is within the Lower Choctawhatchee River Water-

*The National Water Quality Initiative will work in selected watersheds to help farmers, ranchers and forest landowners improve water quality and aquatic habitats in impaired streams.*

shed in Florida's Panhandle. The river discharges into the Choctawhatchee Bay estuary in the Gulf of Mexico. Both the river and its tributaries support abundant and diverse aquatic life. Agricultural land use predominates in the northern portion of the watershed, in portions of Jackson and Washington Counties, with increasing urban growth around Choctawhatchee Bay.

The river is alluvial, characterized by a broad floodplain, seasonal flooding, and a heavy sediment load. Most of the land cover consists of upland forest, with significant wetland systems along the river and its tributaries. Erosion and sedimentation are major concerns.

### Conservation Funding and Practices

NRCS conservation professionals will provide technical assistance and planning tools to determine which conservation actions will provide the best results to improve water quality on your land. Nutrient management systems, erosion control, conservation tillage, pest management, and buffers systems are just some of the practices being offered as part of the National Water Quality Initiative. To help install these conservation practices, financial assistance to share in the cost of these conservation practices is available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

## Partnerships

NRCS identified priority watersheds through the help of local partnerships and state water quality agencies. Partners sometimes offer financial assistance in addition to NRCS programs. NRCS will continue to coordinate with local and state agencies, conservation districts, nongovernmental organizations and others to implement this initiative. This strategic approach will leverage funds and provide streamlined assistance to help individual agricultural producers take needed actions to reduce the flow of sediment, nutrients and other runoff into impaired waterways.

## Producer Benefits

Water quality conservation practices benefit agricultural producers by lowering input costs and enhancing the productivity of working lands. Conservation investments are good for all Americans because well managed farms limit pollution from runoff, produce food and fiber, sustain rural economies, and provide food security to the Nation. All across the country—farmers, ranchers and forest landowners are voluntarily taking action and putting conservation on the ground to improve water quality on millions of acres!

## Public Benefits

NRCS is proud to be involved in a nationwide effort with landowners and communities to improve and protect our water resources. The landowners and farmers participating in the initiative will receive conservation payments to work on the land in a sustainable way which provides cleaner water. In addition to the financial assistance, the land will remain productive into the future. Communities benefit by having clean waterways, safer drinking water and healthy habitat for fish and wildlife.

## How to Apply

Almost every county in the Nation has a [USDA Service Center](#). To get started, make an appointment at your local office. You will need to establish eligibility and farm records for your land. NRCS will help you complete an application while explaining which conservation practices are available in your watershed. Remember to check with your local NRCS office to see if you are located in a selected watershed.

## For more Information

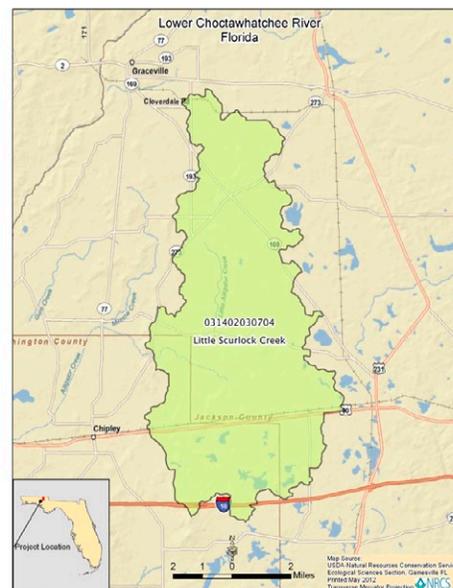
[Florida NWQI website](#) or [www.fl.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.fl.nrcs.usda.gov)

USDA - NRCS, FLORIDA  
2614 NW 43 Street  
Gainesville, FL 32606

### Watershed Contacts:

**Deep Creek and Clarks Creek**  
Tom Cheyne, District Conservationist  
386-328-6522

**Little Scurlock Creek**  
Mary Jane Nelson, District Conservationist  
850-526-2610



*Little Scurlock Creek map (above) and Deep Creek and Clarks Creek map (left).*



United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

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