

What Causes "Black Water"?

As vegetation decays in swamps and forested wetlands, highly soluble tannins leach out and make their way into the water, making it tea-colored and acidic. The bottoms of black water streams are often sandy because the dark water inhibits photosynthesis and the growth of submerged aquatic plants.

Under the creek's surface you can find largemouth bass, catfish, crayfish and several species of sunfish. Numerous species of birds can be seen overhead, wading in the water or perched in the trees. The wetlands also provide habitat for black bears, river otters and alligators. A wide variety of wetland plants and trees are found in the water or on the shoreline.

Dead trees and palms, also called "snags," play an important role in the ecosystem. Above the waterline, a variety of animals use snags to live, rest and look for prey. Underwater, snags provide important habitat for macroinvertebrates, the backbone of the food chain.



Scan QR code for link to this brochure and a georeferenced PDF paddle guide map. A compatible georeferenced PDF mobile map application is required to track your location.

Enjoy Your Trip and Be Safe!

- Plan your route ahead of time and leave your itinerary with someone at home.
- Everyone in the boat must have a life vest or personal flotation device (PFD). BE SAFE... WEAR IT!
- All boats are required to carry an efficient sound-producing device, such as a referee's whistle.
- Bring water, sunscreen and a hat. Keep all food and supplies secured to the boat.
- Be prepared for changing weather. Bringing a rain poncho is a good idea.
- Stay in your boat unless you are at an approved boat launch or designated rest area.
- LEAVE NO TRACE - take a bag for your trash and to help pick up after others.
- **Use Caution** – Areas of matted vegetation along a stream bank are often basking locations for gators. These ancient cold-blooded reptiles mate, nest and protect their young from May to October. IT IS AGAINST THE LAW AND HIGHLY DANGEROUS TO FEED ALLIGATORS!

Help Protect Our Springs, River & Wildlife

- Reduce stormwater runoff by using slow release fertilizers and natural pesticides options.
- Keep septic systems in good working order.
- Pick up animal waste and dispose of it properly.
- Plant Florida native plants in your yard to enhance wildlife habitat and reduce stormwater runoff.



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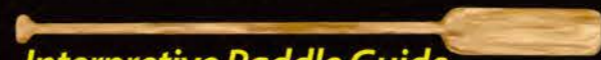
American Alligator
Barbara Howell



Florida Forest Service



Black Water Creek



Interpretive Paddle Guide

Black Water Creek is a major tributary of the Wekiva River and part of the Wekiva Wild and Scenic River System. Every river system designated under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 is a living landscape that must be uniquely managed to protect the public's enjoyment of its heritage resources for present and future generations. The Act purposefully strives to balance river uses with permanent protection for the country's most outstanding free-flowing rivers.

Black Water Creek provides for an enchanting and scenic backcountry paddling experience. The creek falls an average of 1.9 feet per mile over the twenty miles between Lake Norris and the Wekiva River. Of the 36 named springs in the Wekiva Basin, over 20 flow into Black Water Creek. Some springs that feed Black Water Creek include Black Water Springs, Moccasin Spring, Palm Spring, Helene Spring, and Markee Spring. Florida's springs form in the karst limestone bedrock. Caverns that have formed deep underground in slowly-dissolving rock eventually collapse. Sometimes sinkholes result; other times underground water flow is blocked, causing the waters to break the surface as springs. The "rotten egg" smell of some springs comes from hydrogen sulfide, a natural product of sulfate-reducing bacteria which also aid in vegetation decay. Generally, the weaker the odor, the deeper the water's origin in the aquifer.





Ibis
Lou Newman

Black Water Creek typically has a slow-moving current. The creek is fed by outflow from Lake Norris, groundwater seepage and numerous springs.

Upstream Paddle

From **4** Black Water Creek Launch it is a short paddle to **3** Moccasin Spring/Campsite. This spring attracted ancient native inhabitants. Later, this site was used by the Wilson Cypress Company as a loading point for harvested timber and a source of clean water for a steam engine (note the wooden pilings near the spring). This primitive camp site can be reserved.

2 Tramway

Trees were harvested using crosscut saws and floated down rivers or dragged through swamps using cables and steam engines to central loading areas. Many of the current forest roads were originally logging trails or tramways. The tramway that once crossed the creek was removed as part of a mitigation project to restore the creek to its natural flow. Portions of the large culverts used to funnel Black Water Creek under the tram may still be seen.



Steel bridge.
Mark Schweder

1 Steel Bridge

The bridge is located at the end of the paddle trail on private property known as Seminole Woods. Please do not trespass on these private lands. The steel bridge was constructed on pilings that were used as part of the original timberharvesting railway.

White-tailed Deer Fawn
Don Brouillard



Navigating Black Water Creek



Florida Black Bear
Don Brouillard



Red-shouldered Hawk
Ralph Risch

Downstream Paddle

Allow ample time for return paddle against the current.

5 Black Water Campsite

The primitive camp site at this location is available on a first-come-first-serve basis and is primarily used by Florida National Scenic Trail hikers.

6 Sulphur Run

This 3.5 mile spring-fed run flows through the heart of Seminole State Forest. Sulphur Run has numerous downed trees making paddling upstream extremely difficult. The section of Black Water Creek downstream from this point is part of the Wekiva River Aquatic Preserve.

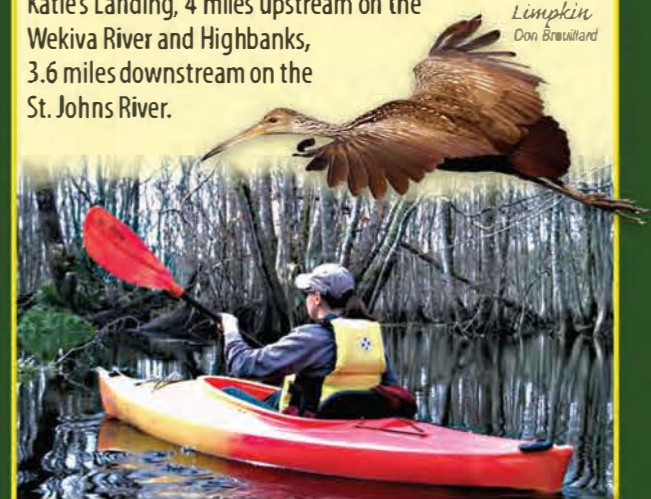
Rest Areas A 7 and B 8

Several open areas are located along the shoreline. You are welcome to pull over and use them as rest spots. Please help us protect these stopovers: "Pack In - Pack Out" all trash including leftover food, litter and hygiene products. Camping and campfires are not permitted. Rest Area B is a remnant of an old tramway; your last opportunity to stretch your legs before continuing on to the confluence with the Wekiva River.

9 Black Water Creek meets the Wekiva River

At this point you are at the confluence of Black Water Creek and the Wekiva River. This is the end of the Black Water Creek Paddle Trail. The closest public take-outs are Katie's Landing, 4 miles upstream on the Wekiva River and Highbanks, 3.6 miles downstream on the St. Johns River.

Limpkin
Don Brouillard



River Otter
Don Brouillard



Florida Red-bellied Turtle
Don Brouillard

