Southwest Georgia

Regionally Important Resources

2022

Southwest Georgia Regional Commission

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Contents

Introduction

A Regionally Important Resource (RIR) is any natural or cultural resource identified for protection by a Regional Commission (RC), following the minimum requirements established by the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). The Southwest Georgia RC is a regional planning agency serving 14 counties and 44 cities in southwest Georgia, which includes Baker, Calhoun, Colquitt, Decatur, Dougherty, Early, Grady, Lee, Miller, Mitchell, Seminole, Terrell, Thomas and Worth counties.

The intent of this plan is to provide an enhanced focus on protection and management of important natural and cultural resources throughout the region, careful consideration of, and planning for, impacts of new development on these important resources, and improved local, and regional coordination for the protection and management of these important resources.

Nominations were sought from individuals, organizations such as land trusts, conservation and environmental protection groups and local governments and governmental agencies to develop the regionally important resources identified in this plan. No nominations were rejected by the Regional Commission.

To be considered for inclusion in this plan, a resource must:

- Show aspects of heritage worthy of recognition, conservation, interpretation, and continuing use
- Reflect traditions, customs, beliefs, or folk life that are a part of the national story
- Provide opportunities to conserve natural, cultural, historic, or scenic features or
- Provide recreational or educational opportunities.

The Regionally Important Resources Map will show the important natural or cultural resources in the region, including the resources identified by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and referred to as the Environmental Planning Criteria (or Part V Environmental Criteria). In the Southwest Georgia region, the criteria include, but are not limited to groundwater recharges areas, wetlands, and protected river corridors.

The Regional Commission also considered the resource identification work of state agencies and environmental protection organizations such as the Georgia Land Conservation Plan, the Georgia Wildlife Action Plan, and the Georgia Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). State parks, wildlife management areas and conservation easements are included on the maps, in addition to natural or cultural resources the Regional Commission determined should be included.

Regionally Important Natural Resources

The Southwest Georgia region has a diverse variety of habitats and resources, ranging from thousands of acres of farmland, to large tracts of native wiregrass and longleaf pine habitat to cypress wetlands to the forest-covered rolling hills, ravines, gullies and lakes in the Red Hills region. The region boasts nine Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) three state parks, large tracts of privately held lands, and significant water resources.

The inventory of Regionally Important Resources includes the relevant Environmental Planning Criteria, the Flint, Chattahoochee and Ochlockonee Rivers, Lake Seminole, Radium Springs, most of the region's Wildlife

Management Areas (WMAs) and state parks, the Red Hills region, the Greenwood Plantation, the Joseph W. Jones Ecological Research Center (Ichauway), and various karst features.

Well protected natural resources preserve habitat for flora and fauna and improve human health. The environmental benefits that greenspaces contribute are necessary elements of healthy ecological systems. Vegetation absorbs heat and decreases temperatures, provides oxygen, and filters the air. Soil and vegetation filter out pollutants in water, and buffer zones along waterways mitigate the effects of flooding.

Because they provide permeable ground cover, greenspaces also serve as groundwater recharge areas. The many natural resource areas allow residents to enjoy nature, enhance the quality of life in the region, and should be preserved and protected.

The map of regionally important resources will attempt to link these resources, to the maximum extent possible, into a continuous regional green space network. The goal is to create additional recreational and environmental benefits by linking green spaces to form extended and connected linear areas for human use, wildlife use, or both.

In terms of human use and enjoyment, greenways are primarily recreational in nature, for activities such as hiking, jogging, bicycling, canoeing and kayaking. Hunters and fisherman appreciate access to greenway resources and the wildlife and habitat improvement benefits they bring.

There are also economic benefits associated with the protection of natural resources. Property values are higher at sites near natural areas, and an abundance of greenspace attracts businesses as well as residents into an area. Owners of small companies frequently rank recreation, parks, and open space as the highest priorities in selecting locations for new business investments.

Because many small businesses have a vested interest in the community and its natural surroundings, they select business locations based on the quality of life offered to their employees. Ideally, properly protected natural areas could enhance tourism and related business development, recreational and year-round housing development, community enhancement and increased local tax bases for the region.

"Part V" Environmental Planning Criteria Resources

The Environmental Planning Criteria were established by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989. Part V of the act charged the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) with developing minimum standards and procedures for protecting important natural resources. There are five resources identified in the act: groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, river corridors, water supply watersheds and mountains.

The Act established that these criteria be established by any governmental jurisdiction that contained any of these features or resources, and that these criteria be incorporated into the suggestions for local governments when developing, preparing, and implementing their comprehensive plans.

This allows local governments to help protect public health and promote local and statewide sustainable economic development by adopting the criteria for environmentally sensitive resources, resulting in public health benefits that are advantageous to all Georgians. The water issues addressed in the planning criteria are also designed to protect fish and wildlife habitats.

Land use management can protect natural resources from loss and degradation. This is vital, because once depleted or contaminated, many resources take years to regenerate or recover, and are extremely costly to remediate, if it is at all possible. The environmental criteria are measures that can save communities

from paying for expensive corrective action in the future. It is far less expensive to engage in quality land use planning than to pay for corrective action.

The quality of life and economic future of states, regions, and communities are directly related to the availability of quality natural resources. Two of Georgia's top industries, agriculture and tourism, rely on the existence of high-quality natural resources. The environmental planning criteria are designed to protect the natural resources that are vital to the continuing prosperity of Georgia.

The three environmental criteria that apply to southwest Georgia are groundwater recharge areas, wetlands and river corridors.

Groundwater Recharge Areas

A groundwater recharge area is any portion of the earth's surface where water infiltrates into the ground to replenish an aquifer. A "significant recharge area" is an area determined by outcrop area, lithology, soil type and thickness, slope, geologic structure, the presence of karst, permeability, and potentiometric surfaces. A potentiometric surface is the imaginary line where a given reservoir of fluid will "equalize out to" if allowed to flow.

In our region significant recharge areas include the surface outcroppings of the large and extensively used drinking water aquifers (e.g., the Floridian, the Clayton, etc.) and soils having high permeability. The roughly one-half of the Southwest Georgia region found to the west of the Pelham Escarpment is considered a significant recharge area and falls into two districts.

The Dougherty Plain district is a wedge-shaped, level to gently rolling lowland that tapers to a point where the Fall Line Hills and the Tifton Upland meet. The northwestern boundary is gradational from the Fall Line Hills and occurs where the slopes become gentler, and the relief is low; the 250-foot elevation approximates this boundary.

The southeastern boundary is the base of the Pelham Escarpment, which separates this district from the Tifton Upland. The region slopes toward the **s**outhwest with maximum elevations of 300 feet in the northeast to a minimum elevation of 77 feet at Lake Seminole. The flat to very gently rolling topography is interrupted by numerous sinkholes. Karst topography is prevalent in this district, and many sinkholes, some still actively forming, are the sites of numerous ponds and marshes.

The Fall Line Hills district is the boundary between the Atlantic Plain and the Appalachian Highlands major divisions. The southern boundary of the Fall Line Hills district approximates the 250-foot elevation line and separates this district from the Dougherty Plain. Eastward, the southern boundary follows the northern extremity of the Pelham Escarpment separating the Fall Line Hills from the Tifton Upland.

Wetlands

Wetlands are areas inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs and similar areas.

The ecological parameters for designating wetlands include saturated soils, aquatic vegetation, and hydrological conditions that involve a temporary or permanent source of water to cause soil saturation. The Part V Ordinance differentiates the following categories of freshwater wetlands and aquatic habitats that are found in our region:

- Open water: Areas of open water, primarily reservoirs, ponds, lakes, rivers, and estuaries.

- Scrub/shrub wetlands: Non-forested areas dominated by woody shrubs, seedlings, and saplings averaging less than 20 feet in height; these wetlands may mingle with forested wetlands, non-forested emergent wetlands, and open water.
- Forested wetlands: Natural or planted forested areas having a dominant tree crown closure of hardwoods, pines, gums, cypress, or any combination of these types. These areas are usually in stream or river floodplains, isolated depressions, and drainage ways, and contain standing or flowing water for a portion of the year.
- Altered wetlands: Areas with saturated soils that have been denuded of natural vegetation and put to other uses, such as pasture, row crops, etc., but that otherwise retain certain wetlands functions and values.

Wetlands are widely scattered throughout the region and are found in every county. Wetland functions include water quality improvement, floodwater storage, fish and wildlife habitat, and they improve the aesthetics and biological productivity of the natural environment.

River Corridors

River corridors are the strips of land that flank major rivers in Georgia. These corridors are of vital importance because they help preserve the qualities that make a river suitable as a habitat for wildlife, a site for recreation, and a source for clean drinking water. River corridors also allow the free movement of wildlife from area to area within the state, help control erosion and river sedimentation, and help absorb flood waters. In this plan the major rivers include the Chattahoochee, Flint and Ochlocknee Rivers.

Policies and protection measures and appropriate development practices apply to the river corridors and their tributaries that are considered to be a “state water” as defined in Section 12-7-3(16) of the Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Act as “Any and all rivers streams, creeks, branches, lakes, reservoirs, ponds, drainage

systems, springs, wells and other bodies of surface or subsurface water, natural or artificial, lying within or forming a part of the boundaries of the State which are not entirely confined and retained completely upon the property of a single individual, partnership, or corporation." A list of state waters may be viewed at the following link:

http://www.gaepd.org/Files_PDF/305b/Y2008_303d/Y2008_Rivers_Streams.pdf

Rivers

Flint River

Value

The Flint River, contained entirely within the state of Georgia, stretches from the Upper Piedmont to the Chattahoochee River in southwest Georgia, and is one of only 40 rivers in the nation's contiguous 48 states that flows unimpeded for more than 200 river miles. It drains an area of 8,460 square miles and has a mean daily flow of 4,030 cubic feet per second (cfs) at Newton.

The river begins as groundwater seepage in Hapeville, an Atlanta suburb. The water that collects there quickly disappears under the runways of Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, then flows southward where it is joined by water from tributaries including Sullivan, Mud, and Camp creeks. The river

passes through two power-generating lakes—Lake Blackshear near Cordele and Lake Chehaw near Albany—before it meets the Chattahoochee River 265 miles downstream from its headwaters.

The river is home to an abundance of unusual animals and plants including the shoal bass, which is highly prized among fishermen, the Halloween darter, the gulf sturgeon, and 29 species of freshwater mussels. The Lower Flint contains springs and caves, which are home to the Georgia blind cave salamander and the Dougherty Plain cave crayfish. The shoals spider lily, discovered in the 1770s by naturalist William Bartram, can be found on the Flint, along with greenfly orchids, corkwood, needle palm, and the very rare relict trillium.

The Flint River's Atlantic white cedar swamps are the most distant from the coast to be found; these trees are usually encountered in such locations as the Great Dismal Swamp in Virginia and North Carolina or peat bogs in New England.

Total wetland acreage in the Flint basin has been estimated at about 412,000 acres; approximately 90,000 acres are in the forested floodplain of the Flint River Basin and floodplains and swamps associated with Chickasawhatchee and Spring Creeks.

The lower part of the Flint River Basin, together with the upper part of the Apalachicola basin, has the highest species density of amphibians and reptiles on the continent north of Mexico. The Flint River was declared the most-scenic stream out of the 53 streams studied in Georgia in 1976 by the Department of Natural Resources.

More than 600,000 Georgians make the Flint River Basin their home. Folks from south Atlanta to Thomaston rely on the river and its tributaries for their water supply. In the Coastal Plain, the aquifers that are intricately tied to the area's rivers and streams are relied upon for municipal, domestic, industrial, and agricultural water supplies.

Water use in this region is dominated by the huge agricultural industry of Southwestern Georgia with more than 1,145,000 acres in crop production. Water needed to quench the thirst of this industry is pumped primarily from the Upper Floridan aquifer, as well as from streams and ponds.

Vulnerability

Six percent of the surface waters sampled in the upper Flint River and 19 percent of those sampled in the lower Flint River are categorized as “impaired” by the Environmental Protection Agency. Nonpoint sources and urban/storm water runoff are the primary contributors to pollution in the Flint. In the Flint River Basin, there are approximately 43 rivers and streams listed on the 303(d) list as waters not meeting water quality standards.

Additionally, there are approximately 142 facilities, including industries and municipalities, authorized to discharge wastewater into the Flint River Basin pursuant to National Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permits.

The Clean Water Act (CWA), the basic Federal law designed to control water pollution in the United States, prohibits the discharge of any pollutant into waters of the United States except in compliance with a NPDES Permit. These impaired waters include roughly 325 miles rivers and streams in the Flint River Basin.

Potential effects of heavy agricultural pumping are not fully understood and there is concern that the water resources may be stretched to their limits during times of prolonged drought. There is also concern that the growing need for additional

water supply for metropolitan Atlanta may potentially impact the in-stream flows of the Flint.

The development of additional upstream reservoirs located on Flint River tributary streams seems probable. Environmentalists are concerned about the effects of additional impoundments and withdrawals on in-stream flows and aquatic habitat.

Flow into the Flint River near the headwaters in Atlanta is mainly stormwater runoff that often carries chemicals and impurities into the river, but riparian streamside buffers help protect downstream waters from pollution by filtering runoff that flows into the Flint.

The middle and lower sections of the Flint River Basin are relied upon heavily by the agricultural industry for irrigation. During the summer months many billions of gallons of water are pumped from the streams and aquifers in this region to quench the thirst of Georgia's farm crops, but the condition of the water resources and the many aquatic habitats of the Flint River have, for the most part, remained healthy.

The Flint River is important not only to Georgians but also to Floridians who depend on the flow from Georgia to ensure the sustainability of the marine ecosystem in Apalachicola Bay. The bay is one of the most productive estuarine systems on the Gulf of Mexico, and the center of a commercial fishing industry responsible for $134,000,000 in economic output and an additional $71,000,000 in value added impacts.

Continued population growth in the metropolitan Atlanta area cannot continue without the development of additional water supplies, and the Flint and its tributaries are potentially in jeopardy.

The value of the water resources of the Flint River Basin to Georgia, in terms of economics, human welfare, and the environment is enormous, so careful

development and diligent conservation of these water resources are important concerns for everyone.

Chattahoochee River

Value

The Chattahoochee River forms the southern half of the Georgia/Alabama state line and is the western boundary for much of the Southwest Georgia region. Its basin drains an area of 8,770 square miles and is the most heavily used water resource in Georgia. The Chattahoochee River arises as a mountain stream in the Blue Ridge Mountains at altitudes above 3,000 feet and flows 430 miles to its confluence with the Flint River. The flow of the Chattahoochee River near Columbia, Alabama averages 8,250 cfs.

The Chattahoochee River, the largest part of the ACF river basin watershed, merges with the Flint River and other tributaries at Lake Seminole, to form the Apalachicola River. The name Chattahoochee is thought to come from a Creek Indian word for "painted rock," and possibly refers to the many colorful granite outcroppings along part of the river. The river is commemorated in the epic poem "The Song of the Chattahoochee" (1877) by the Georgian poet Sidney Lanier who Lake Lanier is named after.

Thirteen of 16 dams in the ACF river basin are on the Chattahoochee River. Pronounced decreases in the frequency of high and low flows have occurred since the start of the operation of Buford Dam that forms Lake Sidney Lanier. Lake

Sidney Lanier, West Point Lake, and Lake Walter F. George provide most of the water storage available to regulate flows in the basin.

Annual flow has not been appreciably altered by the system of dams, although storage is used to augment flows during periods of low flow. Lake Sidney Lanier alone provides 65 percent of storage capacity, although it drains only 5 percent of the ACF River basin.

Today, the Chattahoochee River is valued more as a source of drinking water and recreation than for transportation. Though it is used little for transportation today, it remains the valley's most important ecological and economic asset, because the water it supplies supports the regional economy.

The Chattahoochee River basin is inhabited by about 24 species of freshwater aquatic turtles, 37 species of salamanders, 30 species of frogs and toads, and the American alligator. The Chattahoochee River Basin is home to nine state threatened or endangered plant species, and probably has the largest collection of archeological sites in Georgia, ranging from Paleo-Indian to Creek.

Vulnerability

Florida, Georgia, Alabama and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) have been engaged in litigation over sharing the waters within the basin of the Apalachicola, Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers, and have focused primarily on the Corps' operation of its four Chattahoochee River dams.

Pollution from Columbus impacts the river, as does industry on the Alabama side. Erosion of soil from surrounding farmland enters the Chattahoochee River, degrading aquatic habitat.

Although the highest impairment of surface waters in the Chattahoochee River comes from urban/storm water runoff, nonpoint and municipal point sources, and combined sewer outflows occurs in the upper and middle reaches of the river

(the upper Chattahoochee is ranked in the top 10 percent of the most polluted watersheds in the state of Georgia and in the top 20 percent in the nation).

Significant sedimentation and agricultural runoff into the Chattahoochee occurs in the Southwest Georgia region as well.

Ochlockonee River

Value

The Ochlockonee River is in one of the region's most important river corridors and is one of the most significant greenways in the region. About 1,460 of the 6,330 square miles (almost one quarter) of the Ochlockonee River basin are in Georgia. The headwaters are located in Worth County and the river flows southwesterly into Florida and eventually empties into the Gulf of Mexico. At the town of Havana, Florida the flow is 1,530 cfs according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

A 1988-90 land cover study showed 41 percent of the basin covered in forest, 8 percent in wetlands, 2 percent in urban land cover, and 44 percent in agriculture. In 1997, there were 384,436 acres in the Flint River basin devoted to agricultural production, representing all the major commodities grown in Georgia (peanuts, corn, cotton, oats, rye, sorghum, soybeans, and tobacco).

The river and its corridor are home to many fish, wildlife and plant species that are endangered, threatened or of special concern. Old Spanish documents refer to this river as the Rio Agna and other times as the Rio de Lagna. On a map dated 1683, it is referred to as the Rio Lana. English maps of the eighteenth century show the name as Ogeelaganu and Ochloconee.

With this name, the river probably retains the flavor of the Hitchiti language. Both the names Lagna and Lana may be Spanish renditions of the Muskogean

word LAH'nee for yellow. In those days Georgia clay would have made the entire river as yellow as the river above the 60-year-old Lake Talquin dam is today.

During flood stages the river picks up organic matter and transports it downstream into the estuary of Ochlockonee Bay. The estuary serves as a nursery for numerous species of fish and shellfish which are the basis for recreational and commercial fishing as well as the seafood the area is known for.

Florida's portion of the Ochlockonee River is recognized as an Outstanding Florida Water and is a popular canoe trail.

Vulnerability

In many parts of the Ochlocknee basin, native aquatic life is threatened by sediment loading, which can choke and alter the stream bottom and degrade the aquatic habitat.

A second important type of habitat degradation in the Ochlockonee basin is loss of riparian tree cover, which leads to increased water temperatures, and a corresponding and sometimes unhealthy decrease in levels of dissolved oxygen.

In the Ochlockonee River Basin, there are approximately 18 rivers and streams listed on the 303(d) list as waters not meeting their designated use of fishing.

These impaired waters include roughly 150 miles of rivers and streams in the Ochlockonee River Basin.

Currently, there are approximately 13 facilities, including industries and municipalities, authorized to discharge wastewater under the NPDES permitting program into the Ochlockonee River or its tributaries.

Lake Seminole Resources

Lake Seminole

Value

Lake Seminole is a reservoir in the southwest corner of Georgia along the border with Florida. The Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers join at the lake, before flowing from the Jim Woodruff Lock and Dam, as the Apalachicola River. Lake Seminole was formed in 1954-1957 after the dam was constructed by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. The west end of the dam is in Florida and the east end is in Georgia. Approximately two-thirds of Lake Seminole is in Georgia.

The lake covers 37,500 acres, extends up the Chattahoochee River 50 miles and up the Flint River 47 miles, and has 250 miles of shoreline, not including the numerous islands. Although Lake Seminole covers 37,500 surface acres, it averages only 10 feet in depth. These unique conditions have created a rich aquatic habitat that supports a variety of lake species.

Lake Seminole holds the title of the fifth best bass fishing lake in the country, and attracts thousands of anglers each year. Tree stumps, grass beds, and marshy areas dot the lake's bottom, creating natural homes for the lake's generous year-round population of hybrid bass, largemouth bass, striped bass, and white bass. Lake Seminole is also known for its excellent catfish, crappie, and bluegill. In total, anglers have reeled in at least 79 different species of fish from the lake.

Lake Seminole is also known for its scenic beauty and bountiful populations of ducks, geese, herons, and other aquatic birds, deer, turkey, raccoons, possum, and other animals that range up and down the river seem especially concentrated here. Alligators roam the area, and nearly 100 pairs of ospreys and 50 pairs of bald eagles nest near the lake.

Silver Lake WMA

Value

The 8,400-acre Silver Lake Wildlife Management Area is in the extreme southwest corner of Georgia, only a few miles from Florida.

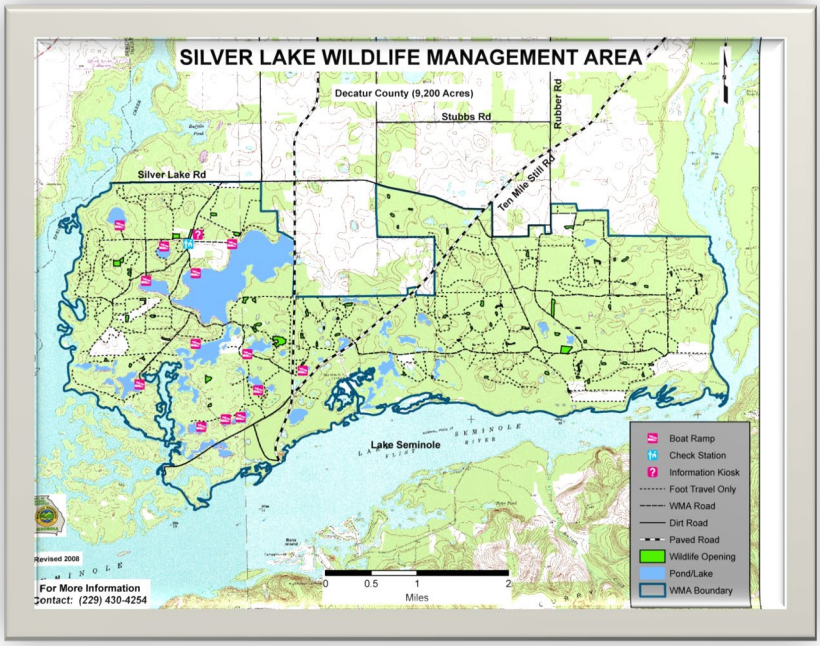
The Conservation Fund, a nonprofit organization that helps government agencies, land trusts, nonprofit organizations and other partners acquire and protect landscapes valued for recreation and wildlife habitat, purchased this property in 2007 from International Paper, which managed it as part of a private forestry research site (one of only a handful of such research sites) for more than 50 years.

The tract contains 1,800 acres of mature, longleaf pine habitat, some of which date to the early 1900s. For decades, frequent controlled burns were conducted to maintain the open, park-like setting that provides optimal habitat for many species like the loggerhead shrike and Bachman's sparrow. Currently, about 18 red-cockaded woodpecker family groups make the mature longleaf pines home, while bobwhite quail and wild turkey use the grassy understory.

Longleaf pine species like the Florida pine snake, coachwhip and gopher tortoises are common, and rare snakes including the southern hognose and eastern indigo snakes may be present. Dozens of isolated wetland ponds dot the landscape, some of which now hold water permanently following the creation of Lake Seminole in 1958. Others provide important breeding sites for a variety of amphibians that inhabit longleaf habitats.

Ornate chorus and pinewoods tree frogs are especially abundant, and hardwood hammocks dominated by live oaks and huge loblolly pines provide refuge for whitetail deer and wild turkeys.

Silver Lake itself, the 350-acre namesake of the property, supports several nesting pairs of osprey, at least one bald eagle nest and several small rookeries of wading birds along the cypress-lined shoreline. Wintering waterfowl also make use of the lake and isolated wetlands.



Recreational opportunities on the wildlife management area include hunting, fishing, birdwatching and hiking, all in an area of the state with little other public hunting land. The purchase will also complement the Lake Seminole WMA, which is leased from the Army Corp of Engineers and is adjacent to the Silver Lake property

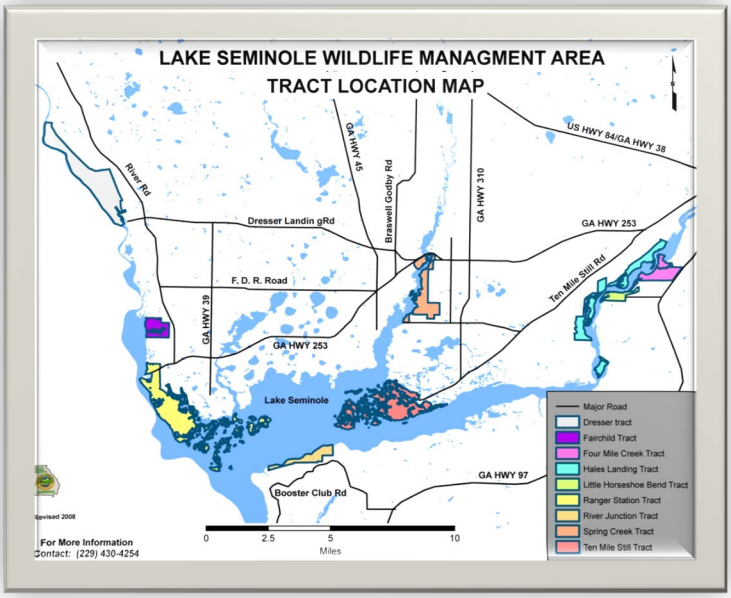
This large tract is highly significant for its pristine forest habitat and recreational value and was identified as one of six priority areas in Georgia's State Wildlife

Action Plan. It also has several small, isolated wetland ponds in addition to Silver Lake, which provides habitat for woods storks and other wading birds. This tract is the first state-owned property to have a population of red-cockaded woodpeckers.

Seminole WMA

Value

Lake Seminole WMA consists of a series of separate areas along the shoreline of Lake Seminole. The shoreline in this area is excellent habitat in spring and fall for migrant birds, and in winter the lake gets a good population of ducks and sparrows at various times.



Vulnerability of Lake Seminole Resources

The budget for the Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites Division has been reduced by 39 percent for fiscal year 2009 which is a decrease of about $10.6 million. The effect could mean fewer staff for state parks, including park rangers and cuts to park resources, ranging from vehicles for park patrol to lawn mowers and paper towels. A loss in resources could result in a loss in the number visitors and the fees they pay, and further decrease the revenue that is needed to support the park system. Beyond the park fees or concession sales, state parks and their visitors also contribute economically to the rural communities surrounding them.

Encroachment and development along Lake Seminole's waterfront detracts from the beauty of the shoreline, causes an increase of siltation in the water body from disturbed soils and impervious surfaces, and an increase in the amount of potentially harmful fecal bacteria entering the lake because of septic tanks and drain fields.

Lake Seminole is vulnerable to excess nitrogen from development in the Chattahoochee River watershed and agricultural fertilization in the Flint River watershed and Spring Creek sub-watershed.

Invasive exotic species such as Hydrilla (an aquatic weed) leads to trouble with boat navigation, reduces flow in drainage canals which can cause flooding, degrades habitat, and decreases property values. Invasive species exact an economic cost through not only the direct cost of controlling the problem species, but through a loss of revenue. Largemouth bass weight, growth and fecundity were considerably less in the part of Lake Seminole with a high concentration of Hydrilla, and recreational visitation to Lake Seminole declined as Hydrilla coverage increased.

A protracted "water war" between Georgia, Florida, and Alabama has produced little agreement on how much water should be set aside for drinking, industry, agriculture, and recreation in the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) River

Basin. Because the ACF River Basin is an important water source for metropolitan Atlanta, there is concern about how best to balance urban growth in the upper portions of the basin while minimizing potential harm to downstream areas including Lake Seminole.

The regional water councils, through the development of regional water plans, will determine the water management practices to meet each region's future water resources needs. The regional water plans, which must be submitted to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division by June 30, 2011, will identify a range of expected future water needs for each region. These long-term regional water resource management plans will include resource assessments, estimates of current and future water needs, and management practices necessary to meet the region's needs without harming the resources, but questions remain how growth and increasing demand for water in the headwaters of the Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers might impact southwest Georgia.

Tired Creek Lake

In 2010, Grady County secured a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to construct the recreational fishing lake at the confluence of three creeks. The lake is located at the site that was originally identified for a Georgia State Park in the 1960s and opened to the public on May 25, 2018. Viewed from above, the 960-acre lake has the shape of a giant turkey track where three minor creeks—the Buss, Sapp and Black—feed into Tired Creek. In some areas the lake is 30 feet deep and has good cover for fish.

Value

Tired Creek Lake is a favorite of many South Georgia and North Florida anglers. In addition to fishing and boating recreational activities, the lake provides revenues for Grady County through fees and permits. A proposed campground

for recreational vehicles and a bicycle trail system would also provide additional revenues if constructed.

TIRED CREEK LAKE
(PHOTO CREDIT, GRADY COUNTY)

Vulnerability

Tired Creek Lake took some political wrangling before permits were secured, and options to maximize the resource continue to generate much discussion. The Lake Authority, County Commission, and private planning and engineering consultants will all help determine the future of Tired Creek.

Radium Springs

Value

Radium Springs is located several miles southeast of Albany. It is considered one of the "Seven Natural Wonders of Georgia" and is the largest natural spring in the state. The deep blue waters of Radium Springs are a part of an extensive underwater cavern system that flows at 70,000 gallons per minute into nearby Flint River.

The temperature of the water stays 68 degrees Fahrenheit year round and contains trace amounts of radium. Prior to the discovery of radium in the water in 1925, the site was known as "Blue Springs" because of its clear blue water. Some of the purest water in the world can be found in caves

hundreds of feet below Albany, and this same water flows from every faucet in the city. Its purity and plentiful supply are the reason many large manufacturers have chosen to build and expand in Albany.

In the 1920s, an ornate casino was built overlooking the spring, and Radium Springs became a popular spa and resort . Elaborate terraces and stonework were added to create the effect of a grand European resort. Northerners on their way by train to spend winter in Florida often stopped to swim in the springs, which were thought to be healthful because of the radium.

Vulnerability

The area was in its tourism heyday in the 1920s during the spa and resort days. The casino was restored after a fire damaged the structure in 1982, and again after a 500-year flood in the wake of tropical storm Alberto in 1994. A second flood in 1998 severely damaged the casino, and it was ultimately demolished in 2003.

In 2001, the springs faced a challenge when a developer wanted to build a 170-unit apartment complex across the road, and the zoning request was approved. Today, however, there is active interest from the Dougherty County Commission to construct botanical gardens on the site of the former Radium Springs Casino.

Conservation Areas

Conservation areas include both public and private lands that are under some form of land conservation program. State wildlife management areas, state parks, and privately held conservation easements are all considered Regionally Important Resources because of the value they have as land that will remain undeveloped in perpetuity. Some of these areas provide critical habitat to rare or endangered plant and animal species. In addition, a significant amount of this

property is publicly accessible providing both recreational and educational opportunities to the region's citizens.

Wildlife Management Areas

Value

Most hunting in Georgia is done on private land, so hunters and outdoor enthusiasts in southwest Georgia who do not belong to a private hunting club are fortunate to have nine Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and Refuges available with public access for hunting and other outdoor activities. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) oversees these WMAs, and manages over one million acres of public land in state parks, natural areas, public fishing areas and wildlife management areas. These properties are managed to protect and conserve Georgia's diverse wildlife populations.

Southwest Georgia Wildlife Management Areas and Natural Areas		
Name	*County*	*Acreage*
Albany Nursery WMA	Dougherty	300
Chickasawhatchee WMA	Baker, Calhoun, Dougherty	19,700
Doerun Pitcherplant Bog NA	Colquitt	600
Elmodel WMA	Baker	1,600
Lake Seminole WMA	Seminole	16,900
Mayhaw WMA	Miller	4,700
Silver Lake WMA	Seminole	8,400
Wolf Creek Preserve NA	Grady	140
River Creek WMA	Thomas	2,437

Chickasawhatchee Swamp (Swamp of Toa)

Value

The Chickasawhatchee Swamp is the largest wetland in southwest Georgia and the second largest deep-water swamp in Georgia. It is a convergence area of

drainage basins in a watershed of approximately 335 square miles. Creeks fed by surface water and groundwater sources meander around gently rolling hills of upland forest consisting primarily of pine stands. Areas between these uplands and bottomland habitat are particularly important to the ecosystem because of the exceptionally high diversity of plant and animal life there. A number of rare plant species including the corkwood, needle palm, and green fly orchid are found in the swamp.

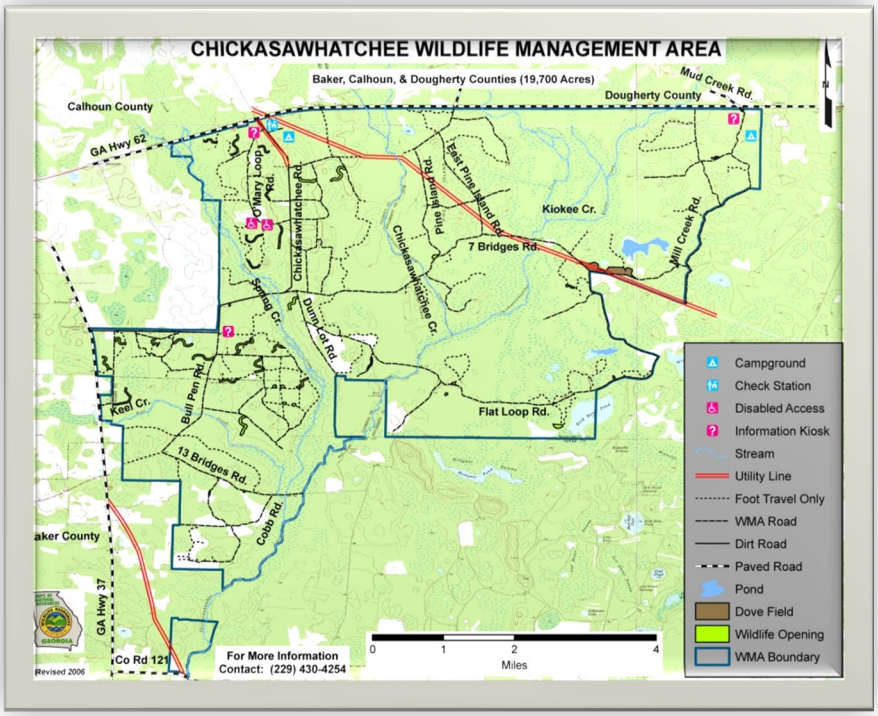
Water from the creeks spreads out and regularly floods vast areas of bottomland hardwood forests. These low-lying areas have a tremendous water-holding capacity and play a major role in flood control for the region. Covered with stands of healthy cypress, tupelo, and black gum, the large bottomland hardwood forests are typically inundated. Here the swamp releases a large quantity of nutritious matter from decaying vegetation that stains the water a golden-brown color.

From the interconnection of forest, creeks, and wetlands emerges a complex food web, which supports a variety of wildlife. A diverse variety of reptiles, including many species of turtles and snakes, as well as a large population of alligators, thrives in the swamp. The wetland areas are used as rookeries by native wood storks and also serve as nesting areas for the Wood Thrush and Prothonotary Warbler, which depend on the swamp.

Beneath the swamp is the Ocala limestone, the major formation of the Upper Floridan aquifer. The lowland areas are massive depressions in the limestone that formed through gradual subsidence that occurs as underlying limestone bedrock dissolves and collapses. The relatively direct connection to the aquifer immediately beneath the swamp makes the Chickasawhatchee hydrologically distinct from other deepwater swamps.

Because of this connection, rapid exchanges of water between the swamp and the aquifer take place as both aquifer recharge, and as natural discharge to the streams through numerous springs and seeps. During much of the year, the Spring Creek watershed that contributes to the Chickasawhatchee Swamp

receives most of its water as discharge from the Upper Floridan aquifer in an area northwest of the swamp. The creek maintains flow even under extreme drought conditions. During high flow periods, the swamp is a major recharge area of the Upper Floridan aquifer.



Wetlands such as the Chickasawhatchee Swamp improve the quality of water by removing harmful chemicals and nutrient pollution through the process of biofiltration. The significance of the Chickasawhatchee Swamp is doubly important because both surface water and groundwater quality are dependent on the system's ability to function naturally. The Chickasawhatchee Swamp protects water quality in the Upper Floridan aquifer (the most important regional source of drinking water) and improves the health of surface water that passes through it on its way to the lower Flint.

The Chickasawhatchee Swamp serves as a primary recharge area for the Floridan aquifer. This aquifer, which provides water to significant portions of Florida and Georgia, is one of the largest remaining freshwater swamps in the southeastern United States and is second in size only to the Okefenokee Swamp. The swamp contains thousands of acres of mature bottomland hardwoods and a wide variety of rare plants and animals. The Nature Conservancy began a series of land purchases totaling more than 20,500 acres at a cost of more than $40 million to

protect these important wetlands from development and agriculture. The Nature Conservancy then transferred 14,200 acres to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to be used as a wildlife management area, and the remainder was sold to a private buyer and will remain protected through a conservation easement.

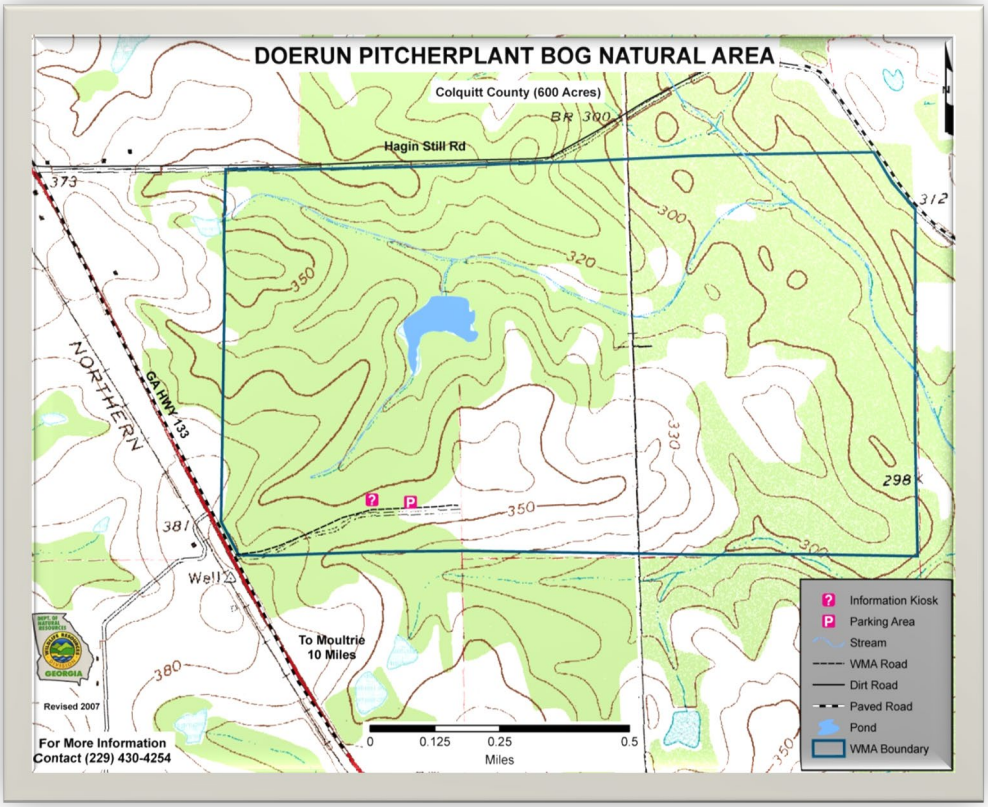
Doerun Pitcherplant Bog Natural Area

Value

The 650-acre Doerun Pitcherplant Bog Natural Area in Colquitt County contains a healthy longleaf pine/wiregrass community and about 30 pitcherplant bogs. Three of the state's seven species of pitcherplants- the yellow flytrap, the hooded pitcher plant and the parrot pitcher plant are found in the preserve.

The preserve also provides habitat for red-cockaded woodpeckers and gopher tortoises. Additionally, the federally endangered American chaffseed only exists in fewer than 35 small populations in Georgia and was recently discovered at the Pitcherplant Bog Natural Area. The state acquired the tract, located about 36 miles south of Albany near Doerun, from the Barber family in 1996.

In 2002, the DNR dedicated an access trail to the bog, allowing visitors to view the pitcher plants. In addition to preserving a unique example of a rare ecosystem, the area provides an important environmental education resource and is a valuable attraction for wildlife watchers.



Wolf Creek Preserve

Value

This 140-acre tract of land in southern Grady County borders the Florida state line and has significant botanical value because it contains the largest and densest known span of Trout lilies in the world. Trout lilies, more commonly found in the northern parts of the state, are not typically found in southern Georgia, and are considered an endangered

species in Florida.

There are also rare spotted trilliums on the tract. Other unique wildflowers include bloodroot, the Crane fly, green fly and southern tway blade orchids. Wolf Creek is a hardwood forest that is home to many old chestnut oaks, white oaks and beech trees.

The property consists mostly of 40–50-year-old mixed hardwoods with some scattered spruce and pine and contains good quality beech-magnolia slope forest – a high priority habitat identified in the State Wildlife Action Plan. Wolf Creek runs through the property for a half mile and has an intact high-quality floodplain with several seeps and few invasive species.

Wolf Creek is now a protected site, owned by Grady County and managed by the Birdsong Nature Center and the Red Hills Land Conservancy.

River Creek (Rolf and Alexandra Kauka) WMA

Value

River Creek is a 2,437-acre tract of land between Barnett's Creek, which borders the property for about 4.4 miles to the west, and the Ochlockonee River, which forms the eastern boundary. The tract, several miles west of Thomasville in Thomas County, contains some of the best long-leaf pine habitat in the world.

River Creek has about 500 acres of the trees. Adjacent to the tract to the east is Greenwood Plantation which also contains some of the best examples of old long-leaf pines in the world.

The property was acquired in 1936 by Superman creator T.T. Scott, a comic book publisher. Mr. Scott farmed the land and had a small dairy operation, hogs and a few cattle. The Kaukas, owners of nearby Chinquapin Plantation, bought River Creek in 1986 and managed the property for deer and turkey. The land was

purchased by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources from the Conservation Fund in 2005 for $7.3 million. The Conservation Fund bought the tract from Kauka Farms, Inc. in January.

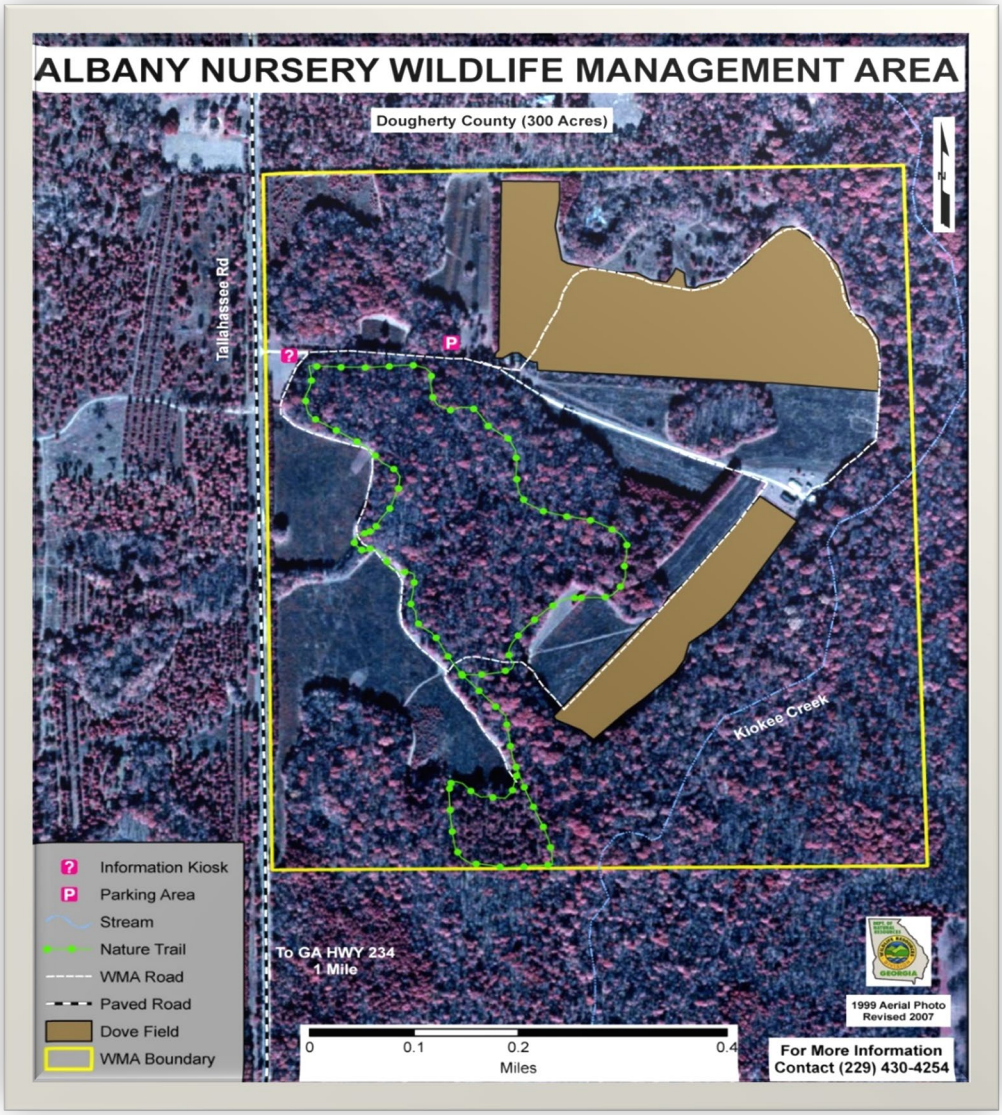
The land provides habitat for species such as the gopher tortoise, northern bobwhite quail, Bachman's sparrow and red-cockaded woodpecker. The floodplain forest along the Ochlockonee River harbors numerous species of migrant songbirds as well as white-tailed deer and numerous wild turkeys.

Albany Nursery Wildlife Management Area

Value

The Albany Nursery WMA, just west of Albany in Dougherty County, has a mixture of fields and mature lowland hardwood forest that appeal to a wide variety of wildlife species and provides drainage for nearby upland areas. A large hardwood canopy with scattered large pines follows the edge of a forested wetland that often holds water during the late winter and early spring.

White-tailed deer, wild turkeys, bobcats, foxes, raccoons, gray squirrels, wood ducks, and barred owls are some of the more common species that inhabit the area. Various species of hawks can be seen hunting for prey over the fields near the trail, and in the spring and fall an abundance of songbirds can be observed. Several other species of non-game birds are year-round residents and provide regular opportunities for bird watchers.



Mayhaw Wildlife Management Area

Value

The Mayhaw WMA near Colquitt in Miller County contains 4,681 acres in three tracts of hardwood bottoms, cypress-gum wetlands, and young and mature pines. Ibis and wood storks may be seen in the wetlands during the summer.

Vulnerability of Wildlife Management Areas

In 2009 the DNR's Wildlife Resources Division announced that there will be three fewer WMAs in the state's program and one WMA will be reduced in size. These changes illustrate how vulnerable these natural areas are to economic downturns and the resultant budget cuts.

There is a need to restore 50 acres of emergent wetlands on Mayhaw WMA through the installation of a water control structure and construction of perimeter levees. An emergent wetland is a class of wetland dominated by grasses, sedges, rushes, forbs and other rooted, water-loving plants that emerge from the water or soil surface; marshes are an example. The wetland will be managed as an emergent marsh for natural aquatic vegetation.

Some planting of waterfowl foods such as Japanese millet may be included as well. Water levels will be maintained on the site year-round for a period of three years to allow submerged aquatics to become established and mature. This project will be managed by the Georgia DNR to provide increased foraging habitat for migrating and wintering ducks and offer additional waterfowl habitat.

Because the limestone beneath the Chickasawhatchee Swamp is so hydraulically well-connected to the Upper Floridan aquifer, and because the role of the swamp is so critical as a major recharge area to the aquifer, agricultural chemicals could potentially contaminate the aquifer if the resource is not well protected. Agricultural lands abut the swamp to the west, and it is critical that the area remains adequately protected and preserved.

Hundreds of years ago, much of the Southeast was covered with longleaf pine forests and savannahs. Now, less than 3 percent of these areas remain. In the 1980s alone, southern Georgia lost over a third of its acreage of longleaf pine forest. The main culprits are timber harvesting and habitat fragmentation. To protect one of the rarest parts of the longleaf pine ecosystem, the Georgia DNR purchased the Doerun Pitcher Plant Bog to protect against threats to Pitcher

plant habitat that result primarily from lack of fire management and from drainage by ditching. Fortunately, the need for conservation of these species in the wild is becoming well known and the public has expressed concern about protecting these unusual plants.

State Parks

Reed Bingham State Park

Value

Reed Bingham State Park includes 1,613 acres located 6 miles west of Adel, Georgia, and was the last park the state acquired in the 1950s when the Commissioners of Roads and Revenue of Cook County deeded 624 acres to the State of Georgia for the purpose of a state park in 1958.

The park surrounds a 375-acre lake that has become a major boating and water-skiing attraction. The park offers a swimming beach and three boat ramps.

Activities and amenities offered for recreational surface water use include boating, canoe rentals, a fishing dock, and fishing boat rentals. Visitors may

see wildlife such as spotted turtles, limpkin, indigo snakes, nesting bald eagles, alligators and more. During winter, thousands of black vultures and turkey vultures arrive in late November and stay through early April, making this park the largest winter vulture roost in Georgia.

Approximately 78 percent of the plant communities found in the Coastal Plain can be seen along the nature trails, which are some of the most diverse trails in the country. The lake is popular among fishermen, and fishing for bass, crappie, catfish and bream is excellent. The bottomlands in the park contain plants such as bald cypress, tupelos and spruce pine that have adapted to wet conditions. This area is the interface between higher and drier uplands and the aquatic river environment.

There are also areas of mixed southern hardwoods, where there are towering southern magnolias, hickory, American holly and the rare silky camellia, an area of open pine woodland where longleaf pines wiregrass, flowering dogwood, yellow jessamine and highbush blueberry may be found, and even an area with a variety of "scrub oaks" (turkey, blue jack, laurel and blackjack) and sassafras, sparkleberry, persimmon and two species of rare pitcherplants. Gopher tortoises are also abundant in this area.

Seminole State Park

Value

The 604-acre Seminole State Park provides excellent boating, fishing and birding opportunities. The park sits on the north side of Lake Seminole on the

east side of Fish Pond Drain in Seminole County. Cottages, campsites and picnic shelters near the lake offer excellent views and access. Because the park surrounds a small cove, visitors enjoy smooth water for skiing and tubing. A sandy beach is also provided for swimmers. The lake is shallow, but natural lime sink ponds create areas of cool, clear water with a variety of fish.

Wildlife is abundant throughout the park, and a 2.2-mile nature trail leads visitors past gopher tortoise burrows, over a wetland boardwalk, and into of the largest longleaf pine forests found in a Georgia state park. Folks may see alligators, osprey, bald eagles and other wildlife. The nearby wildlife management areas provide additional opportunities to observe wildlife and great duck and deer hunting.

Vulnerability of State Parks

Georgia is ranked sixth in the nation in biological diversity but faces the threat of 83 invasive or potentially invasive plant species, 111 invasive animals and 30 species of invasive disease-causing organisms. Invasives are plants and animals accidentally or intentionally introduced outside their natural ranges which cause harm to the environment, economy (estimated national economic losses of $120 billion/yr) or even human health. Approximately 42 percent of threatened or endangered species are at risk due to non-native, invasive species.

The financial health of the Georgia Parks system tends to reflect the economic health of Georgia. In the early 2000s, revenue increases for the state led to large capital improvement projects and new parks, but with the economic downturn of the late 2000s, a budget reduction for the park system of 18 percent will cause a reduction in services, maintenance, staffing, and perhaps the closure of some state parks.

Water quality issues directly affect the two state parks included in the inventory of regionally important natural resources. Streams impaired with high sediment loads, excessive fecal coliform bacteria and low dissolved oxygen levels are listed

by the EDP as not meeting water quality standards and feed directly into both Lake Seminole and Reed Bingham Lake. Reed Bingham Lake is also listed for elevated mercury levels resulting from non-point source contamination. Invasive aquatic weeds also negatively affect both lake habitats.

Red Hills Region

Value

The Red Hills Region is a 300,000-acre area located roughly between Thomasville, Georgia and Tallahassee, Florida. Known for its rolling hills and red clay soils, the region is rich in biological diversity, historic resources, and scenic beauty. Hunting plantations in the Red Hills contain a significant portion of the native longleaf pine forests remaining in the United States and the largest contiguous acreage of privately owned land. There are 64 threatened and endangered plant and animal species in the Red Hills.

The Red Hills Region contains the largest concentration of undeveloped plantation lands in the country and has been identified for special conservation efforts. The Nature Conservancy has designated the Red Hills as one of America's “Last Great Places.”

The Red Hills connect coastal and northern natural areas, and function as a preserve that provides habitat corridors and the genetic diversity necessary for the survival of far-ranging mammals and migratory birds. Decades of game bird management provide habitat for rare species such as the federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker, the gopher tortoise and many other animals and plants.

The national organization Scenic America, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing the visual character of America's communities and countryside, identified the Red Hills canopy roads as one of the

ten most scenic corridors in the United States in 1997. More than 300 miles of public roads wind their way through the Red Hills, providing views of a landscape of wildflowers, pines, open fields, tobacco barns, historic cemeteries, marshes and groves of live oaks that have remained virtually unchanged since the late 1800s.

Traces of earlier cultures that were attracted to the region's fertile soils, abundant lakes and rolling hills are reflected in the historic sites found in the Red Hills including Native American ceremonial mound centers, Spanish missions, antebellum plantation mansions, tenant farms, and other reminders of the area's history. Many of these sites and districts are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and a few are open to the public.

Vulnerability

Urban sprawl is the number one threat to the Red Hills, fragmenting the landscape and degrading its quality. Over the last few decades, Tallahassee's sprawling growth has consumed thousands of acres of forest in the Red Hills and continues to move north into southwest Georgia.

Development and insurance costs are generally less in Georgia than in Florida, and land development regulations are less stringent in Georgia, so southwest Georgia is an attractive area for development. Development threatens to undermine rural land uses and strains the fiscal resources of local government to provide the necessary infrastructure to serve that sprawl.

Greenwood Plantation

Value

Greenwood Plantation, a 5,700-acre plantation near Thomasville, was a cotton plantation built around 1835-40 and acquired in 1899 as a hunting estate by

Colonel Oliver Hazard Payne. The family of one of his descendants, John Hay Whitney, has had the house for almost 100 years.

It is one of the most ecologically significant, privately held properties in the Southeast, and contains a significant stand of longleaf pine wire grass ecosystem. Today, managed by the Nature Conservancy, it contains a 1,000-acre tract known as Big Woods that has trees ranging in age from 200 to 500 years old, and an extremely diverse groundcover.

In addition to its longleaf pine grasslands, the Greenwood property contains a distinct longleaf pine sandhill community known as the Plateau, a slope forest along the Ochlocknee River, and Heard's Pond, a 700-acre wetland area critical for the endangered wood stork. The diverse landscape at Greenwood means that a wider variety of plant and animal species are found at the property - not just those species associated with longleaf pine habitat.

Other species of concern at Greenwood include the pine snake, the gopher tortoise, Bachman's sparrow, wire-leaf dropseed, the wood stork, yellow fringeless and snowy orchids, and Turk's cap lilies.

Many techniques of prescribed burning and sustainable forestry were developed here by foresters Ed and Roy Komarek, Herbert Stoddard, and Leon Neel. The plantation house also has seen much history, for example Jackie Kennedy came to Greenwood to rest after the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

Vulnerability

The Whitney's, and now the Nature Conservancy, have been fine managers of the property, and indeed a method of the forest management work, called the "single tree selection method," which is a conservative approach to logging, was pioneered at Greenwood.

However, if the Nature Conservancy ever decides to relinquish its ownership of the property to an owner that is not as preservation-minded, the property could become more vulnerable.

Development pressure northwest of Greenwood and to the south of Greenwood could potentially impact the property.

Joseph W. Jones Ecological Research Center (Ichauway Plantation)

Value

Ichauway is a 29,000-acre outdoor laboratory of the Joseph W. Jones Ecological Research Center, located in Baker County. Ichauway was established as a quail hunting reserve in the 1920s by Robert W. Woodruff, who became the long-term chairman of the Coca-Cola Company.

The tract contains of the most extensive tracts of longleaf pine and wiregrass in the United States. Longleaf Pine-Wiregrass Savannas are recognized as a High Priority Habitat in the Georgia Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy and are heavily dependent on frequent fire for maintenance.

Ichauway also contains wetlands, 25 miles of streams, and 5,000 acres of old-field habitat. These resources represent some of the richest species diversity of the southeastern Coastal Plain.

Field demonstrations and workshops provide information about prescribed fire, longleaf pine forest ecology and sustainable management, ecological restoration of threatened ecosystems and wildlife habitat, traditional quail habitat management, threatened and endangered plants and wildlife, wetland protection and management, watershed conservation, and the importance of water resources and aquatic ecosystems of Southwest Georgia.

Vulnerability

Because management of these diverse natural resources is the focus of the Center's conservation program, and because much of the surrounding area is large plantation lands facing little growth pressure, currently Ichauway is not at great risk.

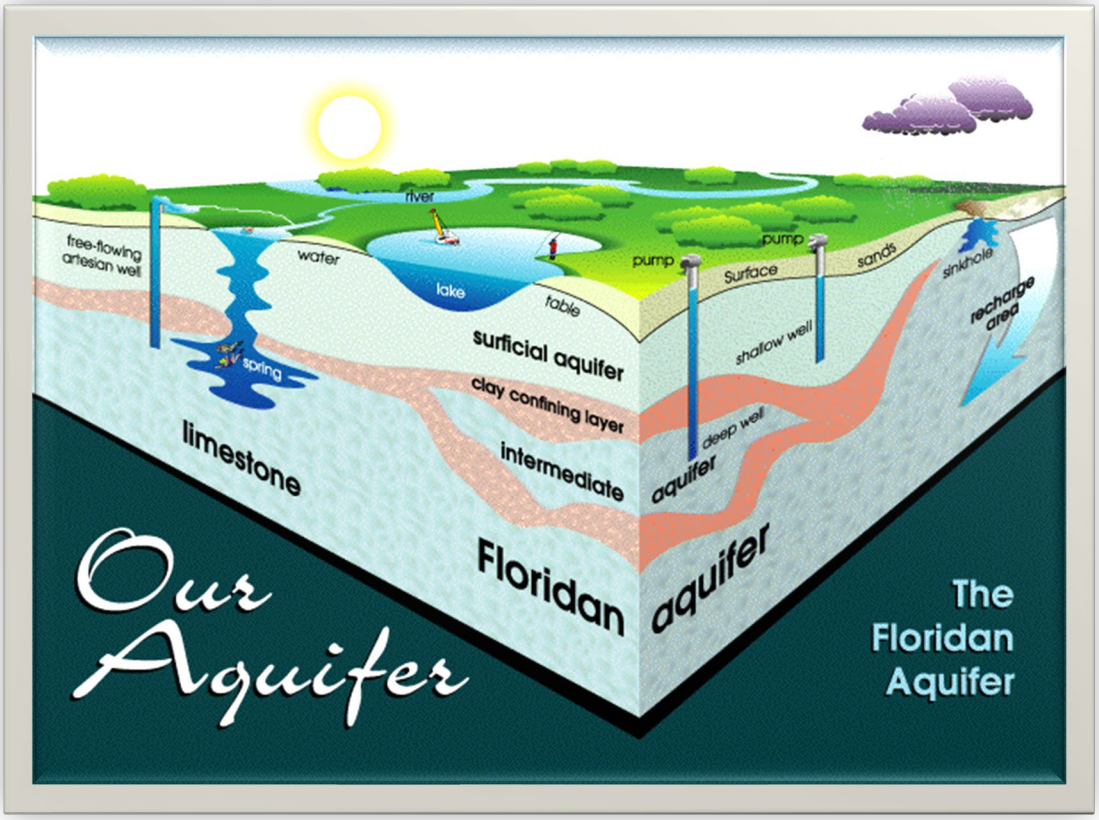
Aquifers and Karst Features

Value

The Floridan aquifer, one of the most productive aquifers in the world, underlies nearly all of southwest Georgia. An aquifer is a formation that contains sufficient saturated, permeable material to yield a significant amount of water. The Floridan aquifer system is a series of Paleocene (60 million years old) limestone formations that extends from southeastern Alabama to South Carolina and Florida.

In most places, the Floridan aquifer is artesian, confined above and below by relatively impermeable clay layers. In southwest Georgia, the aquifer is semiconfined, and recharges annually with seasonal rainfall. Where the aquifer is at or near the surface, many springs can be found. The Floridan aquifer is the largest, oldest and deepest in the southeast, covers over 100,000 square miles,

and provides most of the water for municipalities and agriculture in southwest Georgia. Its importance to the region is incalculable.



Karst regions are landscapes shaped by the dissolution of a layer or layers of soluble bedrock such as limestone, that generally contain distinctive surface features such as sinkholes and caves. Due to subterranean drainage, there may be very limited surface water, or even an absence of rivers and lakes.

Caves are recognized as a High Priority Habitat in the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy and are found primarily along the Pelham Escarpment in the southwestern portion of the region. These Coastal Plain caves provide habitat for high priority species such as the southeastern myotis bat and Georgia blind salamander. Several exceptional caves and karst features are found in the Southwest Georgia Region.

Glory Hole Caverns

The Glory Hole Caverns are in northern Grady County in limestone that is roughly 7 million to 16 million years old containing fossilized sea life, helictites "cave flowers," “soda straws,” stalactites, stalagmites, and an abundance of calcite formations in shallow pools of water.

Forest Falls (The Lime Sink)

Forest Falls, also located in Grady County, is one of the most unusual waterfalls in our nation. The waters of a small creek cascade from the surrounding flat country into a huge sinkhole and disappear into a cavern at the bottom. The sinkhole is one of the largest in Georgia, covering an area the size of several football fields.

The falls held the title of the highest (or deepest) waterfalls in the entire Coastal Plain of the eastern United States, with a drop of more than 120 feet. Forest Falls was a regional attraction back when American Indians frequented the site and was popular with the first pioneers the area in the 1820s. By the 1870s, it had become a favorite site for sightseeing, family outings and picnics.

Today the area is surrounded on the north and west by cultivated fields. A nearby stream was channelized and straightened, trees and underbrush on both sides were clear cut, erosion drastically increased, so today the sink is mostly filled in with mud. Today the waterfall drops less than 10 feet.

Blowing Cave

Blowing Cave is located in northwest Grady County about eight miles northwest of Cairo. The cave was well known to early settlers of the area, and by the 1850s had become a curiosity that brought visitors from around the region. By the

1960s, the entrance was restricted because of siltation, and today can no longer be entered.

Vulnerability

Most caves, sinks, caverns and other karst features are on private land and are not protected, so many of the interesting features in the region have been silted up due to agricultural runoff or channelization of streams. Frequently property owners are not interested in developing, protecting or preserving the features, so degradation of the resources continues.

Attapulgite Mines

Value

Attapulgite is mined at two sites in southwest Georgia. One site is near Attapulgus in Decatur County, and the other is near Meigs in Thomas County. Attapulgite, a type of fuller's earth, occurs in a type of clay found in the region. The name “attapulgite” is derived from the town of Attapulgus, where the mineral is abundant. It is surface-mined then ground and separated into particle sizes, and transported in covered railroad hopper cars or shipped by truck in 50-pound bags.

Attapulgite is used in a wide range of applications for its suspension, reinforcement and binding properties. Paints, sealants, adhesives, tape-joint compound, catalysts, suspension fertilizers, wild-fire suppressants, foundry coatings, animal feed suspensions, kitty litter, absorbents and molecular sieve binders are just a few uses of attapulgite. It is also used in a wide variety of applications such as ceramics, catalyst, concrete, sealants, adhesives and plastics.

Attapulgite is also used widely in medicine. Taken orally, it physically binds to acids and toxic substances in the stomach and digestive tract.

Used as an anti-diarrheal, it is believed to work by adsorbing the bacteria or germ that may be causing the diarrhea, and is used in many anti-diarrheal medications.

Additional uses for attapulgite include the blue coloration seen on Maya and Aztec codices, and early colonial-era manuscripts and maps. It is also used as a special drilling mud in the petroleum industry for boring into formations contaminated with salt.

Vulnerability

Currently development pressure near the mines is at an ebb until the economy recovers, but the areas could be at increased risk after economic recovery.

Longleaf Pine Habitat

Value

The longleaf pine/wiregrass ecosystem once covered approximately 90 million acres in the Southeastern United States. This unique ecosystem, shaped by thousands of years of natural fires that burned through every two to four years, has been reduced to fewer than two million acres, representing a 97 percent decline in this important ecosystem.

Today, only scattered patches of the longleaf pine/wiregrass ecosystem remain. About half of these surviving stands of longleaf pine exist on public lands.

The longleaf is valuable in many ways. It is a hardy species, relatively wind firm and resistant to many insects that attack other pines, such as the pine tip moth and southern pine beetle, and diseases such as fusiform rust and root rot.

The wood of the longleaf pine is dense and strong; its long, straight boles yield high-value wood products. Longleaf pine is not only more tolerant of fire than is loblolly pine or slash pine; it actually requires fire for its survival. This species can

grow and survive well on poor, sandy soils, but it can also grow as well as other pines on sites with better soils.

Vulnerability

Factors contributing to the decline of the longleaf pine ecosystem include fire suppression efforts, clearing for agriculture and development, aggressive logging at the turn of the last century, and conversion to other pine types for faster growth and profits. Today, more than 30 plant and animal species associated with, and dependent upon longleaf pine ecosystems, including the red-cockaded woodpecker, are listed as threatened or endangered.

Appropriate Development Practices for Natural Resources

The following best management practices are recommended, when applicable, for developers when proposed developments are within one mile of the Regionally Important Resources identified in this section and included on the Regionally Important Resources Map. This listing will also be used by the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission for reviewing Developments of Regional Impact (DRI) located within one mile of these resources.

- Riparian and aquatic buffers between waterways and new development should be used to protect on-site wetlands.
- Impervious surfaces should be minimized through the use of pervious pavement materials where possible, through a minimum of parking, by narrowing roadways, and through cluster or conservation developments where permissible.
- Natural growth, especially mature trees, should be preserved where possible, and ground disturbance should be minimized to the extent possible.

- Developments that require open space are encouraged.
- Strategies to preserve green space such as conservation easements, fee simple acquisition and conservation tax credits will be encouraged.
- Natural landscape buffers at the periphery of the Regionally Important Natural Resources are encouraged.
- Landscaping should be done using low impact native species where possible.
- Site plans should be sensitive to the natural features of the site including woodlands, steep slopes, wetlands, and floodplains.
- Bioretention and biodetention basins should be used to help contain, retain and filter water.
- Bioretention swales should be used to help contain, retain and filter water.
- Infiltration basins should be used where possible.
- Greenways and trails to linking living areas, schools, shopping and other focal points as part of the open space network is encouraged where possible.
- Developments should be planned so that the natural or existing drainage patterns and natural flood flows are preserved or approximately reproduced.
- Careful site planning should minimize the adverse impact of noise, vibrations, fumes, and visual intrusions to Regionally Important Natural Resources.

General Policies and Protection Measures for Natural Resources

The following is a list of general policies and protection measures recommended for appropriate management of the areas included on the Regionally Important Resources Maps. This list is intended as guidance for local governments in planning or decision-making that affects Regionally Important Resources. The

Regional Commission will also utilize the General Policies and Protection Measures for reviewing local comprehensive plans for consistency with regional plans as provided in the Local Planning Requirements, and to encourage local governments and other actors in the region to adopt protection measures.

- Prepare Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans to address erosion, sedimentation, and other runoff problems.
- Create environmental advisory groups at the local level.
- Prepare or refer to inventories of all significant environmental resources for use in land use decision making.
- Provide for protection of groundwater supplies including well-head protection programs.
- Provide for the linkage of environmental and recreational open space.
- Develop strategies to preserve and manage forested lands.
- Encourage partnerships between environmental and conservation agencies and the development and business community.
- Establish and maintain an open space and conservation area network, based on existing soil conditions, slopes, watercourses, vegetation and natural ecological features.
- Encourage cluster provisions and other innovative development techniques.
- Capitalize on natural resources through the retention and protection of trees, streams, and other ecological features.
- Conserve large contiguous tracts of woodland to reduce forest fragmentation, maximize woodland interiors, and reduce the edge/area ratio.
- Natural areas containing floodplains and other areas unsuitable for development should be restricted from development except for agricultural, recreational and similar uses.
- Encourage the preservation and protection of natural areas in all development proposals.

- Encourage farming conservation measures such as diversion, terraces, grassed waterways, contour farming, and crop rotation.
- Establish incentives for developers to think “green” in their designs.
- Prepare, adopt, and implement ordinances that address the DNR Environmental Planning Criteria and local water resources (water supply watersheds, river corridors, significant groundwater recharge areas, and wetlands.)
- BMPs outlined by the Georgia Forestry Commission should be followed in the design and maintenance of rural roads near Regionally Important Natural Resources.
- The application of environmental protection strategies such as conservation easements, fee simple acquisition, conservation tax credits, etc. will be utilized where possible.
- Encourage partnerships with land trusts, conservation organizations, and neighboring local governments to protect priority natural areas.
- Educating the public on the benefits and practices of environmental stewardship will be promoted.

Regionally Important Cultural Resources

Cultural resources such as buildings, structures, sites, objects, and landscape features remind us of our diverse heritage and connect us to a common past. Many of the region’s county courthouses, historic districts, churches, mansions, libraries, schools and Native American mounds are all regionally culturally significant.

Regionally Important Cultural Resources tell the story of southwestern Georgia, describe the connection and role of southwest Georgia to the rest of the nation, and help preserve a sense of place.

The preservation of cultural resources has many diverse purposes and rewards, including the strengthening of local economies, stabilization of property values, the fostering of civic beauty and community pride, and the appreciation of local and national history.

The preservation of cultural resources is a public purpose that advances the education and welfare of citizens, while providing economic and aesthetic benefits as well.

Regionally Important Cultural Resources include historical districts, sites, structures, objects or buildings that are significant in regional, state or national history, architecture, archeology, or culture, and encompass all cultures, economic classes, and social, political and private activities from the past to the present.

Two of the 18 sites operated by the Georgia Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites in Division 2 are in the Southwest Georgia Region- the Lapham-Patterson House Historic Site in Thomasville, and the Kolomoki Mounds Historic Park in Early County.

There are five Carnegie libraries, the only covered bridge in Georgia south of Macon, nine courthouses on the historic register, 13 historic districts, Georgia's official state folk life play, and important structures related to the civil rights movement.

The Lapham-Patterson House

Value

The Lapham-Patterson House in Thomasville was built in 1884-85 for $4,500 as a winter cottage for prosperous shoe merchant C.W. Lapham of Chicago.

The house features fishscale shingles, oriental-style porch decorations, inlaid long-leaf pine floors, and an interesting double-flue chimney with a walk-through stairway and cantilevered balcony that exemplify the quality and skill of its Victorian creators.

Due to its outstanding architectural significance, the Lapham-Patterson House was named a National Historic Landmark in 1975.

The residence was equipped with its own gas lighting system, hot and cold running water, indoor plumbing and modern closets.

Like many other successful northerners, Mr. Lapham came to the resort town of Thomasville for its mild, pleasing climate and the supposed therapeutic value of the pine-scented air. The Laphams sold the winter house in 1894, and it was re-sold in 1905 to James G. Patterson.

The Pattersons remained in possession until 1970.

Vulnerability

Due to an economic downturn and state budget shortfalls, the Department of Natural Resources, responsible for the parks and recreation and historic sites, took a severe budget cut of 18 percent, ($22 million) in 2009. There is concern about the recent closure of the Latham Patterson House because of budget cuts, and discussion about finding other state or local funds to reopen the site to the public.

Kolomoki Mounds State Park

Value

Kolomoki Mounds State Park, just north of Blakely, preserves the site of a Native American culture that rose to prominence more than 1,500 years ago, but vanished long before the first European explorers set foot on the southern coast. The Kolomoki civilization rose in the forests of southwest Georgia beginning around 350 A.D. and over the next 250 years became the dominant power of an area that extended south into north Florida and west into Alabama.

Smaller mound groups and village sites producing pottery of the Kolomoki style have been found throughout the region and archaeologists speculate that these towns supported the huge ceremonial complex at the Kolomoki site.

The mounds of Kolomoki, like those at many other Native American sites in the South, functioned as a giant calendar. The massive temple mound is oriented so that from the plaza below, the sun appears to rise from directly behind it on the longest day of the year.

Vulnerability

Georgia's economy is currently going through challenging times, and all state agencies have submitted recommendations for cutting budgets by up to 10 percent for fiscal years 2009 and 2010. The budget cuts will directly impact the state parks and historic site system and may include the possible closure of up to six state parks and seven historic sites.

Specific locations of possible park or historic site closures have not been named because the Department of Natural Resources does not yet know what level of cuts it will be directed to make. The many considerations to determine possible closures include the historical or environmental value of the property, potential for another agency or group to operate it, involvement of federal funds, visitation, operational costs, and other recreational opportunities in the surrounding area.

Carnegie Libraries

Value

Carnegie libraries were built with money donated by Scottish-American businessman and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. More than 2,500 Carnegie libraries were built, including some belonging to public and university library systems. Between the years 1893-1917, Andrew Carnegie, through his library

program, donated funds to build free public library buildings across the United States. Many cities in Georgia were recipients of these grants, including Albany, Boston, Dawson, Moultrie, and Pelham.

Vulnerability of Carnegie Libraries

Carnegie libraries are some of the oldest structures in the oldest neighborhoods in the region. Some of the libraries are in a historic district and surrounding development has been sensitive to the historic context and character of the area, but a library in an area of decline in a city with no active interest in historic preservation is at increased risk.

The preservation of a former Carnegie library that is owned by a non-government entity depends on the level of interest by the owner, and government library budgets depend on the fiscal health of the government- and are often the first cut in financially lean times.

Hand Trading Company Building

Value

Inspired by Chicago's Marshall Field Department Store, Mr. J. L. Hand completed the Hand Trading Company Building in 1916 in Pelham at a cost of $100,000.

The building was equipped with all the modern conveniences, including steam heat, electric lights, ceiling fans and freight and passenger elevators. The building had its own private telephone system and a power plant in the basement with two 50,000-watt generators.

The store sold everything from clothing to groceries to coffins. Four stories tall, with over 98,000 square feet of floor space and crowned with a dome created by

an Italian artist, this historic building is the centerpiece of downtown Pelham. There are two wide stairways that lead from the first floor, converge on a landing halfway up, and extend to the second floor.

From the second-floor iron stairways lead to the third and fourth floors. By day the building is illuminated through the dome's twenty-four opalescent glass panes set in copper frames. Twelve of the windows are six feet in diameter and twelve are three feet in diameter.

The Hand Trading Company Building was purchased by the Joint Development Authority of Colquitt, Grady, Mitchell and Thomas Counties in 2003. Since then, the group has received several grants from the OneGeorgia Authority and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

Vulnerability

The store closed its doors in 1985 and has remained mostly vacant since then.

Several businesses currently occupy the first floor, but the building requires attention. It would cost six to eight million dollars to fully restore the building.

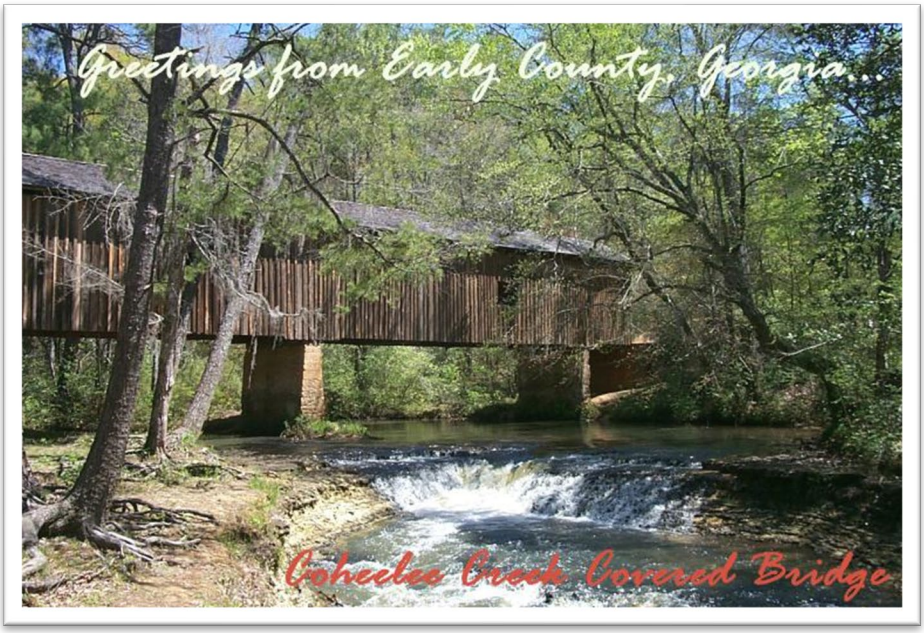
Coheelee Creek Covered Bridge

Value

Covered bridges conservatively once numbered 250 across Georgia in the early 1900s. In 1955, the number had been reduced to 77, and by the 1970s the number was down to 25. Today only 13 covered bridges are still standing in Georgia.

The 96-foot long Coheelee Creek Covered Bridge was built in 1891 at the old McDonald Ford on Coheelee Creek in western Early County. Built by John William Baughman, the bridge cost only $490.41, but still stands today as a unique landmark in the region. Of the 17 original covered bridges that still survive in Georgia, only the Coheelee Creek Bridge is located south of Macon.

A small waterfall close to the bridge accentuates the beauty of the site.



The bridge uses steel rods as tension members in its truss design. The result is similar to a queen post or Warren truss. The angled rod design makes the bridge unique not only in Georgia, but the entire U.S. Citizens of Early County undertook a restoration project in 1984 to stabilize and repair the bridge, which remains in sound structural condition today.

Vulnerability

The bridge, because of its remote location, is a magnet for vandals, is defaced with graffiti, and is at risk of continued additional damage.

Bridge House

Value

Built in 1857, the Classical Italianate style Bridge House in Albany is the only bridge house known to exist in Georgia.

It was built by Colonel Nelson Tift following a dispute between Tift and the county commissioners of neighboring Baker County. When the commissioners refused to build a bridge across the Flint River, Tift hired Horace King, a slave-born African-American and master bridge builder, who bought his freedom by working as a craftsman slave, to construct a bridge that Tift could operate as a business. The Bridge House was built at the same time as the bridge, and a tunnel connected the two.

The house served as a collection point for tolls on wagons and horses using the bridge. On the second floor of the house, Tift operated a luxurious theater and ballroom known as Tift's Hall that attracted many popular actors and musicians

of the time. The Bridge House is the only remaining original part of the Flint River Bridge and is listed on the National Register.

Vulnerability

Downtown Albany has spent over 40 million dollars in recent years to revitalize the downtown and riverfront area. The area has had several development projects recently completed, and the Bridge House does not appear to face immediate threat.

Swamp Gravy

Value

Swamp Gravy is Georgia's official state folk-life play that is performed from July to October every year in an old cotton warehouse in Colquitt, Georgia.

The play is named after the soup made in southwest Georgia from the liquid left from fried fish, along with tomatoes, potatoes, onions, and whatever else is available to throw in the pan. It is a musical based on the stories of Miller County residents, captured on tape and transformed into scripts by Tennessee playwright Jo Carson.

"Swamp Gravy Sketches" opened to rave reviews in the fall of 1992. Among the annual themes have been work, religion, medicine, crime and punishment, local media, and marital and sibling relationships. Some of the stories deal with difficult themes, and from its beginning, one of the goals of *Swamp Gravy* was to bridge the racial divide in a predominantly white county.

After more than 30 performances around the state in 1993, Swamp Gravy received a 1994 Cultural Olympiad Award in Atlanta and was performed there in 1996 at the Olympic Games and later at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

The impact of Swamp Gravy has been felt around the nation as cast members share their art-based community revitalization experiences in communities in Louisiana, Texas, Colorado, Illinois, Ohio, South Carolina and Florida, in addition to other cities in Georgia.

Vulnerability

Swamp Gravy continues to play to sold out shows and is not facing imminent threat.

Mount Zion Church

Value

Formed at the end of the Civil War as a worship place for former slaves, the Mount Zion congregation built a church home at the corner of Whitney Avenue and Jefferson Street in Albany back in 1906. In 1961, representatives from several community organizations met and formed a new organization – The Albany Movement.

The group was formed to coordinate movement activities and chose old Mount Zion as the site for the group's first mass meeting. Mount Zion Church continued to host mass meetings such as those where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke to capacity crowds.

As one of the first cities where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the four major civil rights organizations – the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC), the Student National Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Committee on Racial Equality (CORE) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) - joined forces, Albany is nationally noted as a key civil rights battleground. The old Mount Zion Church building held a prominent place in the history of the Albany Movement and provided the perfect setting for a museum

commemorating those events. The church is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Vulnerability

The neighborhood of Albany surrounding the church appears to be stable, and the Mount Zion Church does not appear to face immediate threat.

Rosenwald Schools

Value

In 1915, Julius Rosenwald, the president of Sears and Roebuck, established a matching grant fund in his name to construct better quality schools throughout the South for African-Americans. Inspired by Booker T. Washington, Rosenwald became a trustee of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, where Washington's philosophy of self-reliance was stressed through a program of industrial education. In 1912, on Rosenwald's fiftieth birthday, the philanthropist gave the Tuskegee Institute $25,000 to be distributed as grants for African-American schools that followed the Tuskegee model. Washington persuaded Rosenwald to use approximately $2,000 of this money to begin an experiment to build elementary schools for blacks in rural communities.

Between 1917 and 1932, his fund enabled the construction of over 5,000 school buildings, forever changing the rural Southern landscape.

Rosenwald Schools played a critical role in educating Georgia's children. In all, more than 35,000 students were taught in 242 school buildings constructed in Georgia with assistance from the Rosenwald Fund. Most Rosenwald schools were closed during the mid-twentieth century, as small rural schools were consolidated into larger, more efficient school facilities. The exact number of Rosenwald school buildings still standing in Georgia is unknown.

Vulnerability

The Rosenwald School in Smithville is in dire need of protection. The structure is structurally unsound and is not secure from the elements. The surrounding neighborhood is characterized as a "neighborhood in decline" in their current comprehensive plan, and Smithville does not have an active historic preservation commission. A second building was identified in the city of Camilla, however due to architectural changes in the structure, it is ineligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The structure is currently a church.

Historic Courthouses

Value

One hundred thirty-two Georgia courthouses are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and illustrate nearly 170 years of Georgia history. Although Georgia has one of America's greatest collections of county courthouses, many of these buildings are endangered.

The courthouse is often the most prominent building in town and is instantly recognized as a symbol of government and serves as an icon of the aspirations and pride of their communities. Courthouses also serve as indicators of a

community's economic health. Courthouse renovations often lead to downtown renovations because local business owners are more likely to upgrade their businesses if the county rehabilitates a nearby courthouse. On the other hand, a courthouse in poor repair sets a negative tone for the community, leading to less business and activity.

Vulnerability

Many of these landmarks are now in danger. While some counties have sensitively expanded their historic courthouse or built nearby office buildings, others have demolished or abandoned historic structures to build larger, but often less architecturally interesting buildings elsewhere. The movement of a courthouse from the downtown not only endangers a historically significant building, but also harms the city. Dislocating county services to the outskirts of town harms the restaurants and businesses within the walking downtown that depended upon that trade.

According to a 2002 study, there are 157 courthouses built prior to 1960 and many are in poor or fair condition. To improve the situation of Georgia's historic courthouses, an Atlanta-based architectural firm estimates it will cost between $1 million and $2.5 million per rehabilitation, with an average cost of $2.1 million, for a statewide total of $466 million.

In some parts of Georgia, it is a lack of growth that endangers the courthouse. Georgia's rural counties often have neither the population nor the tax base to keep their impressive courthouses in the condition they desire. Deferred maintenance due to a lack of funding is a major cause of physical threats to historic courthouses. Courthouses are so central to a community's economic life, social life, and overall quality of life that every effort should be made to ensure that courthouses continue to be an active part of their communities.

Historic Courthouses of Southwest Georgia				
County	*Year of Construction*	*Architectural Style*	*Current Use*	*Listing Status*
Baker	1900	Romanesque	Library/county	Listed on NR
Calhoun	1930	Colonial Revival	Courthouse	Eligible for listing
Colquitt	1902	Classical Revival	County services	Listed on NR
Decatur	1902	Neoclassical Revival	Courthouse	Listed on NR
Dougherty	1968	Modern	Courthouse	Not yet eligible- 2018
Early	1905	Neoclassical Revival	Courthouse	Listed on NR
Grady	1985	Classical Revival	Courthouse	Not eligible
Lee	1918	Neoclassical Revival	Courthouse	Listed on NR
Miller	1977	Modernish	Courthouse	Not eligible
Mitchell	1936	Art Deco	Courthouse	Listed on NR
Seminole	1922	Beaux Arts	Courthouse	Listed on NR
Terrell	1892	High Victorian	Courthouse	Listed on NR
Thomas	1858/1888 remodel	Classical Revival	Courthouse	Listed on NR
Worth	1982	Neoclassical Revival	Courthouse	Not eligible

Historic Districts

Value

Cities across Georgia have adopted local historic preservation ordinances to keep the look and feel of the place they call home. A local historic district is a district designated by a local ordinance, which falls under the jurisdiction of an appointed citizen-board called a historic preservation commission.

Southwest Georgia Historic Districts
Moultrie Commercial Historic District
Bainbridge Commercial Historic District
Bainbridge Residential Historic District
Brinson Family Historic District
Blakely Court Square Historic District
Colquitt Town Square Historic District
Baconton Commercial Historic District
Camilla Commercial Historic District
Pelham Commercial Historic District
Donalsonville Commercial Historic District
Boston Commercial Historic District
Thomasville Commercial Historic District
Tockwotten Love Historic District

It provides communities with the means to make sure that growth, development, and change take place in ways that respect the important architectural, historical, and environmental characteristics within a district. A local historic district is an area that has significance because it has special character or historic, cultural or aesthetic value or interest, or it

represents one or more periods, styles or types of historic architecture, and it stands apart visually as a unique section of the city.

Adopting a local preservation ordinance is one of the best ways a community can begin to protect the historic character of its buildings, neighborhoods and landmarks from inappropriate alterations, incompatible new construction, even demolition. Establishing and maintaining a historic district helps creates jobs, enhances property values, revitalizes communities, and helps attract tourists.

National and statewide economic studies show that historic district designation stabilizes property values and allows values to rise at rates greater than average local market rates as a whole, compared to similar neighborhoods that are not designated.

Vulnerability

Historic districts in Southwest Georgia often face opposition because of concerns by property owners within the districts. Residents might oppose inclusion within a district because they believe they will lose their right to use or alter their property as they want. In some cases, the local historic preservation commission is

reluctant to enforce design standards for fear of pushback by residents.

Dixie Highway

Value

The Dixie Highway is an automobile highway planned in 1914 to connect the U.S. Midwest with the southern United States. It was part of the National Auto Trail system and extended from Ontario, Canada south 5,706 miles to Miami, Florida, and was a network of interconnected paved roads, rather than a single highway.

It was constructed and expanded from 1915 to 1927. The Dixie Highway was inspired by the example of the slightly earlier Lincoln Highway, the first road across the United States of America.

In the early years the Federal government played little role, but from the early 1920s it provided increasing funding, until 1927 when the Dixie Highway Association was disbanded and the highway was taken over as part of national highway system, with some portions becoming state roads.

The route of the Dixie Highway was marked by a red stripe with the letters "DH" on it, usually with a white stripe above and below. This was commonly painted on telephone and telegraph poles along the route. These highways helped the U.S. win the Second World War, allowing great flexibility in ferrying men and materials across the nation and supplementing the nation's rail system.

About 100 miles of the Dixie Highway runs through southwest Georgia, from Smithville south through Albany, Camilla, Thomasville and Metcalf before entering Florida.

Vulnerability

After the divided four-laned U.S. Highway 19 came through the region roughly parallel to the Dixie Highway, traffic along the old highway decreased significantly and has diminished the importance of the route as a component of the regional and national road network.

Historic Cemeteries

Value

Cemeteries are important cultural resources. They are indicators of settlement patterns such as villages, rural communities, urban centers and ghost towns. Cemeteries reveal information about historic events, religion, lifestyles and genealogy. Names on grave markers serve as a directory of early residents and reflect the ethnic diversity and unique population of an area.

Grave marker designs and cemetery decoration and landscaping represent a variety of cultural influences that helped shape the history of Georgia.

Established in large part for the benefit of the living, cemeteries perpetuate the memories of the deceased, who gave their communities the amenities that give a place character and definition. In regions that have a strong sense of history, people are more likely to protect and maintain cemeteries.

Vulnerability

Historic cemeteries are subject to long-term deterioration from natural forces such as weathering and uncontrolled vegetation. Neglect accelerates and compounds the process. Development activities and construction projects are also a threat to these precious resources. Vandalism and theft continue to plague both rural and urban burying grounds in the region.

Appropriate Development Practices for Cultural Resources

The following are recommended best management practices for appropriate development for use by developers when designing new developments within a one-mile radius of Regionally Important Cultural Resources. This listing will also be used by the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission for reviewing Developments of Regional Impact located within one mile of these resources.

- Maintain existing street grid patterns and uniform alignment of facades in new construction by orienting new structures at similar setbacks and lot configurations, that are similar in mass and scale to existing traditional cultural resources.
- Minimize the visual and environmental impacts of parking through careful consideration of location, materials and screening.

- Site plans, building design, and landscaping should be sensitive to cultural and natural features of the site, including topography and views.
- New construction, additions, and infill development should be compatible, but not identical to, historic buildings.
- Creativity of design and contemporary interpretations of historic buildings, which are similar in scale and overall character, is encouraged.
- Apartment developments in infill areas will be designed in such a way to disguise its density (such as designing them to look like a single-family residences) where possible.
- New infill development should use existing structures where possible.
- New developments should create or enhance community spaces like squares and parks.

Policies and Protection Measures for Cultural Resources

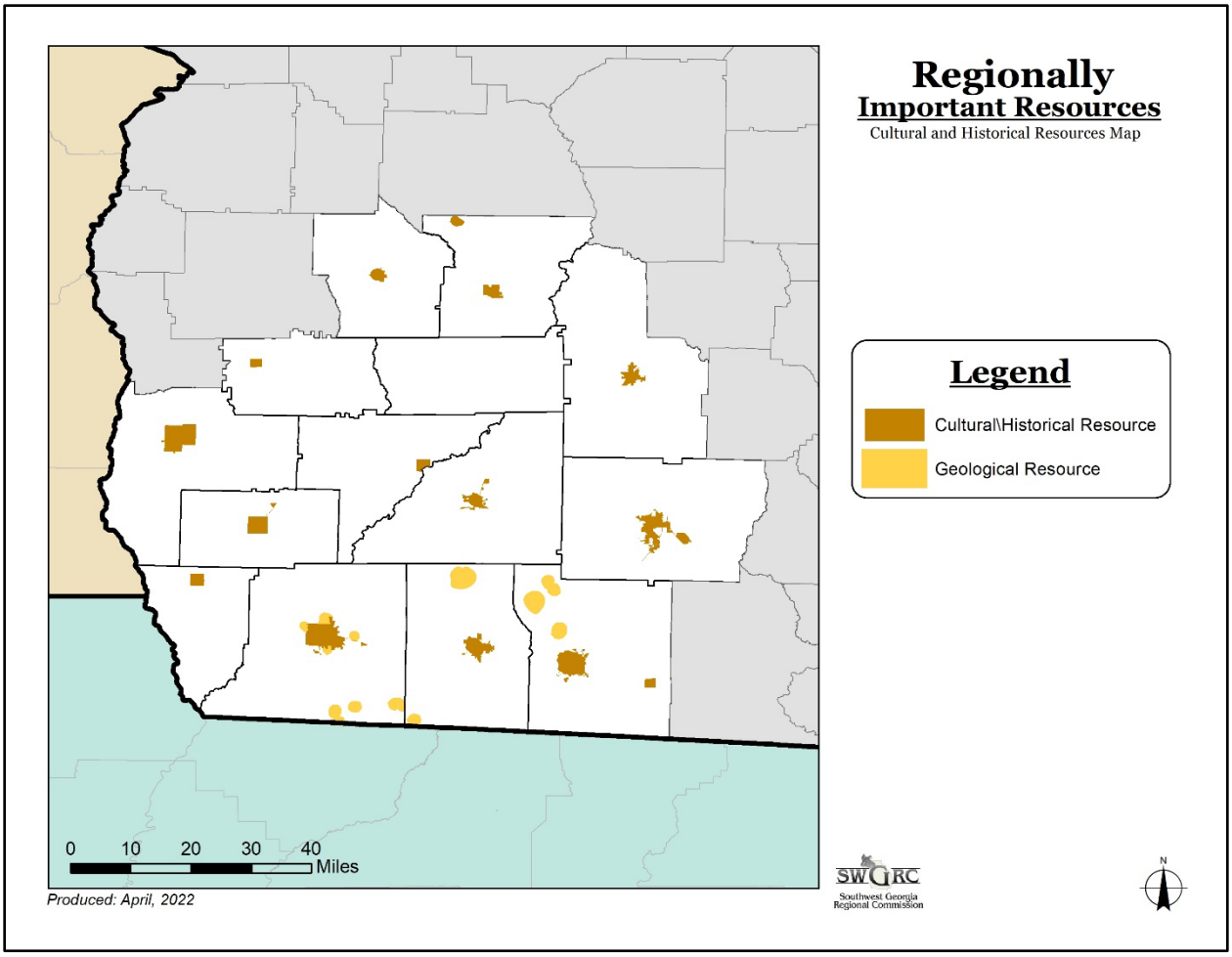
The following General Policies and Protection Measures are best practice recommendations for the appropriate management of the Regionally Important Cultural Resources identified in this Plan. They are intended to provide guidance, direction, and assistance to local government officials and community leaders in planning and decision making that affects the identified Regionally Important Cultural Resources.

The Southwest Georgia Regional Commission will also utilize these policies and protection measures when reviewing local comprehensive plans for consistency with regional plans and to encourage local governments in the region to adopt protection measures, policies, and enhancement activities most appropriate for the protection of the resources.

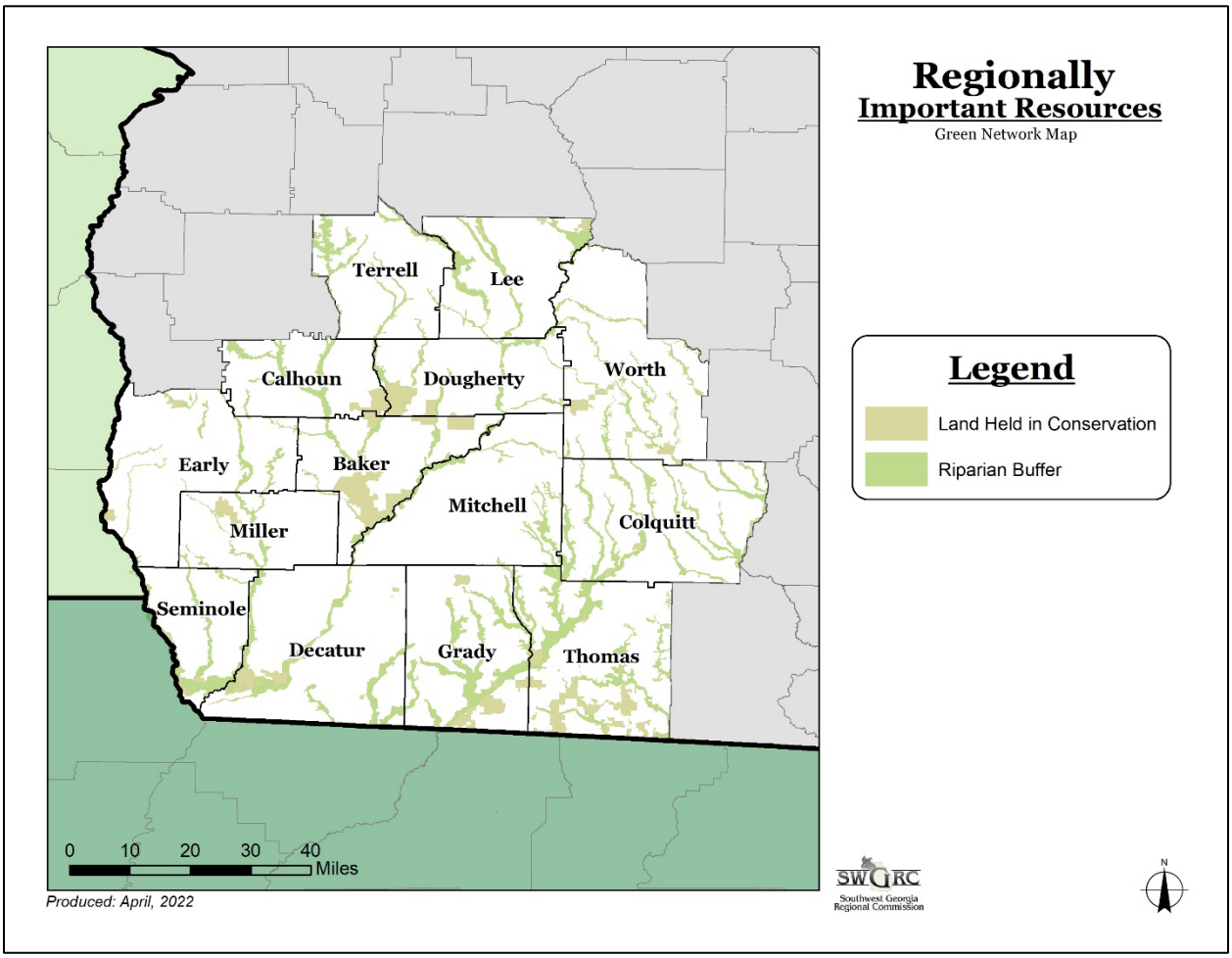
- Preserve, protect, and promote the Southwest Georgia region's unique heritage resources that contribute to the region's distinctive character.
- The protection and conservation of the Regionally Important Cultural Resources will play an important role when planning for and making decisions about future growth and development.
- Encourage the maintenance of all heritage buildings, sites, structures, districts, and objects and their adaptive reuse, when appropriate.
- Support recognition of exemplary preservation, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of heritage resources.
- Encourage and support increased development of historic sites as tourist attractions, when practical and appropriate.
- Support and cooperate with federal, state, and local historic preservation agencies, commissions, and organizations in their efforts to preserve and protect Southwest Georgia's cultural resources.
- Maintain and strengthen, where appropriate, regulations and incentives that protect the region's cultural resources from inappropriate infill development, incompatible alterations or destruction.

Regionally Important Resources Maps

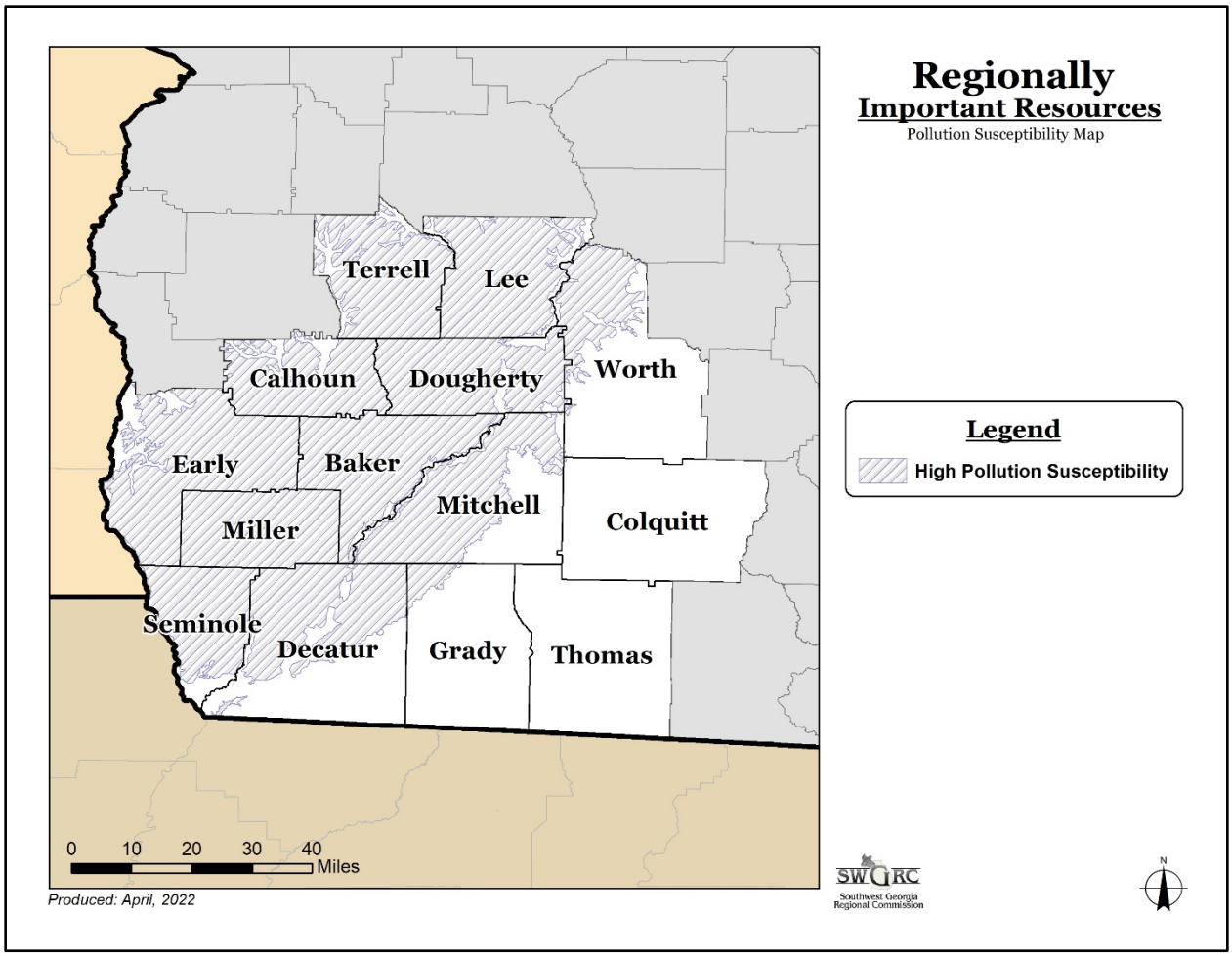
Cultural and Historical Resources Map



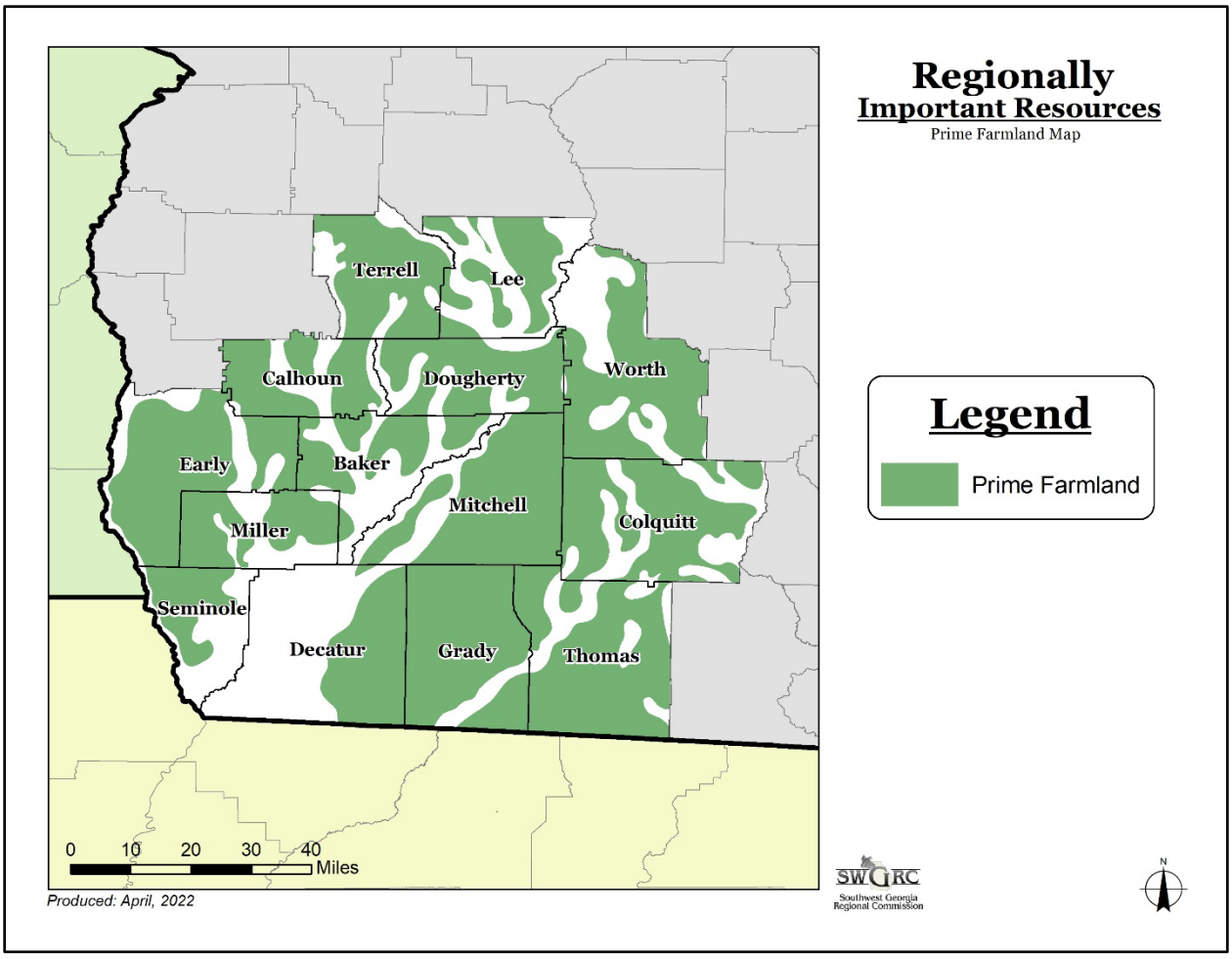
Green Network Map



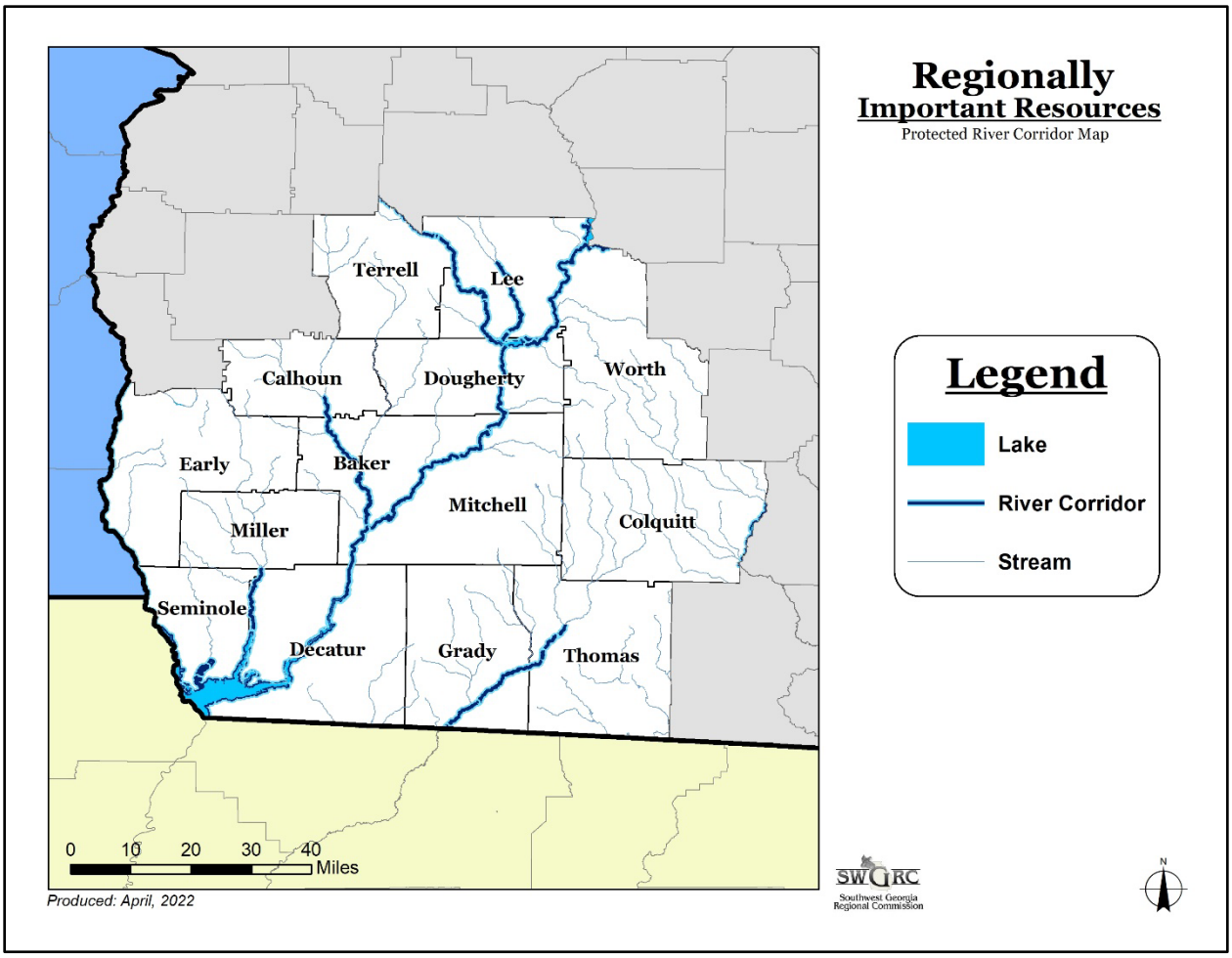
Pollution Susceptibility Map



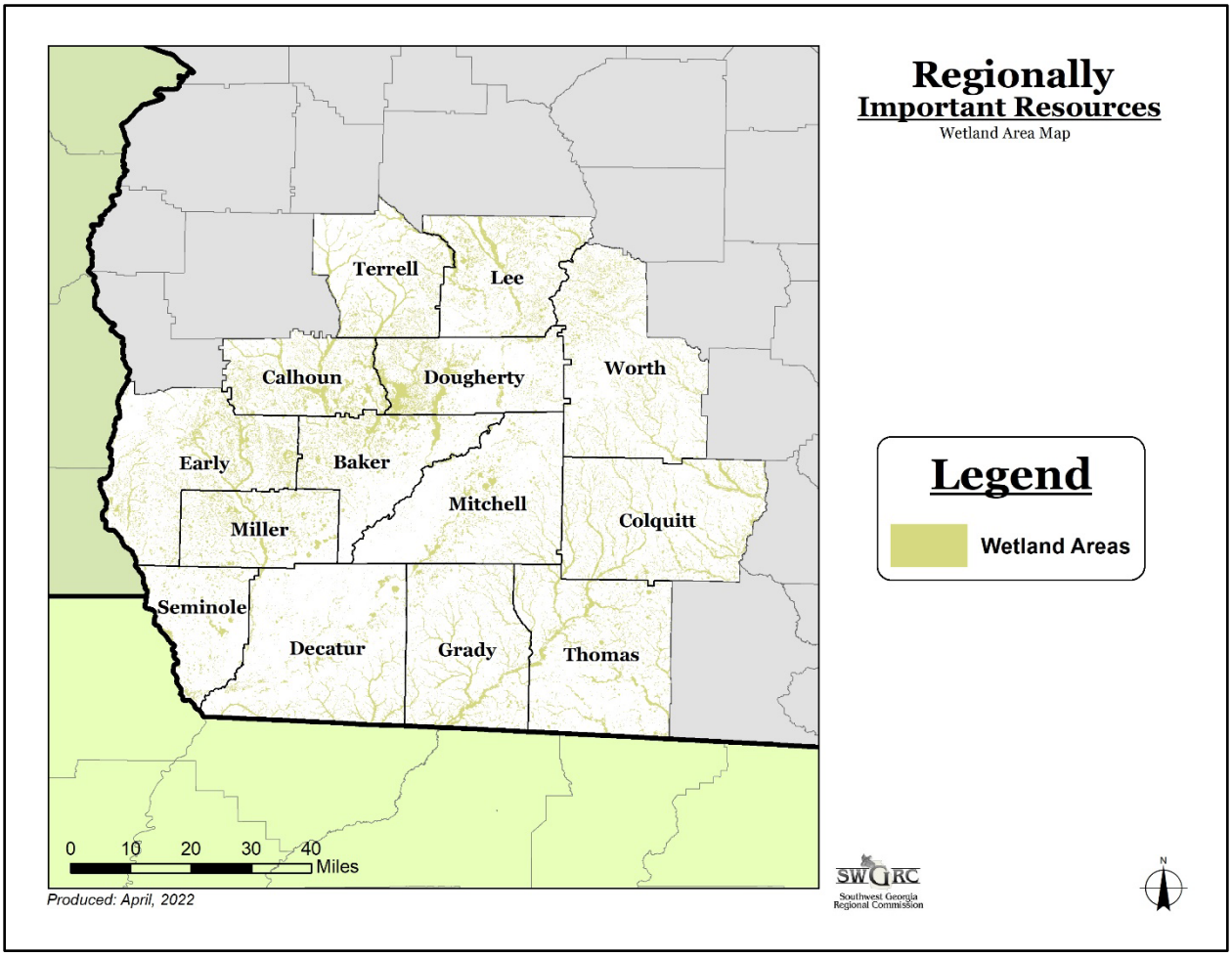
Prime Farmland Map



Protected River Corridor Map



Wetland Area Map



Tired Creek Lake Map