

*in Scarp list  
why?  
Good river but  
not too strong*

THE CHIPOLA RIVER

FLORIDA

A Recommendation for Study As a Section 5(d) River

Under Public Law 90-542

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

Bureau of Outdoor Recreation  
Southeast Regional Office  
Atlanta, Georgia  
August 1971

## CHIPOLA RIVER, FLORIDA

### Region Surrounding the River

Location--The Chipola River is located in northwest Florida in the Apalachicola River basin. Originating in Jackson County near Greenwood, Florida, the river flows almost due south through Calhoun and Gulf Counties and empties into Dead Lake 84 miles from its headwaters. The entire length of the Chipola is recommended for 5(d) designation.

The Chipola region in this report refers to that area encompassed by a circle with a 50-mile radius centered on the midpoint of the river's length.

Population--The population within the region is approximately 400,500. This region is susceptible to visitation by a far greater population due to its geographical location and climate.

The counties of Jackson, Calhoun and Gulf have respective populations of 34,400; 7,600; and 10,000 based on 1970 Bureau of the Census figures. There are several small towns along the Chipola River path, including Marianna and Wewahitcka. Other cities of significant size within the region are: Bainbridge, Georgia (population 7,944); Dothan, Alabama (population 36,733); Panama City, Florida (population 32,096); and Tallahassee, Florida (population 71,897).

Topography--Low lying swampland dominates the topography along the Chipola from its beginning to its end. Along parts of its course, especially near the town of Marianna, the swampland gives way to uplands reaching 100 feet.

Vegetation--Along the river is a swamp forest composed mostly of hardwoods and conifers. Outward from the river swamp on the uplands are mixed hardwoods and pines.

The dominant vegetative types found along this stream are bald cypress, water tupelo, water locust, water ash, red maple and water hickory.

Transportation--Upon completion, U.S. Highway 23 will connect Panama City, Florida, to Montgomery, Alabama. Interstate 10 will link Tallahassee, Florida, to Pensacola, Florida, and cross the Chipola River 5 miles south of Marianna. Access to the river is provided by U.S. Highway 90 and State Roads 20, 22, 162, 278, and 280.

Recreation Opportunities--Seven State parks and 15 U.S. Forest Service recreation areas constitute the vast majority of public recreation developments within the Chipola region. Public recreation facilities in the area have been developed with the tourist in mind and are concentrated near the gulf coast.

Slack Water--Dead Lake, Lake Talquin, and Lake Seminole are the major impoundments within 50 miles of the Chipola. Over 100 natural lakes, sinks, and bays, and the gulf of Mexico are within an hour's drive of the river. Lake Talquin, operated by the Florida Power Company, has 10,000 acres of surface water. Dead Lake, comprising approximately 5,000 acres, is a natural fresh-water lake. Exposed tree stumps scattered throughout Dead Lake provide an excellent habitat for fish. The average impoundment of Lake Seminole is 41,560 acres.

There are presently no permanently protected streams within 50 miles of the Chipola.

### The River

The Chipola flows a distance of 84.3 miles through three of Florida's less populated counties before emptying into the Apalachicola River. Elevation of the Chipola is 85 feet at its source and 5 feet at the mouth, an average fall of .9 feet/mile. Total drainage area for the river is 1,206 square miles.

Depths of the Chipola vary from 2 to 15 feet with widths from 25 to over 100 feet. Water currents are slow to moderate and the water ranges from quite clear to milky and muddy. U.S. Geological Survey records indicate the average flow of the Chipola to be 1,526 c.f.s.

Water Quality and Use--The Chipola waters are classified as class III, thus indicating they are suitable for recreation, propagation and management of fish and wildlife, and industrial usage. The existing general use of the river is recreational fishing. No sources of pollution are known to exist on the river.

Ownership--Ninety-five percent of the riverbanks are privately owned. The major public land holding is the Florida Caverns State Park. (See ownership map.)

Wildlife--Wildlife species along the river course are varied. Leading the list are the whitetail deer and bobwhite quail. Other species common to the area include the grey fox, opossum, swamp rabbit, cottontail rabbit, raccoon, grey squirrel, and bobcat. Waterfowl are numerous because the area is close to the Mississippi Flyway. Fishing is plentiful and a large variety of fish, such as bass, catfish, and bream are found.

Land Use--Approximately 90 percent of the land along the riverbanks is forested. The remaining land uses are farming and pasturage.

### Bibliography

Additional information is available through the State Liaison Officer for the State of Florida.

Maps

General Location Map.

1:250,000 Topographic Map.

Major Land Use Map.

Transportation Route and Access Map.

General Landownership Map.



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