

Big Shoals State Park

Planning Region: Suwannee River

County: Hamilton and Columbia counties

Lease/Management Agreement Number: 3541

Overview

Big Shoals State Park is home to the only Class III whitewater rapids in Florida and protects several distinct natural communities. The park is home to a variety of imperiled plant and animal species, cultural resources, and prominent hydrological features. Resource-based recreational opportunities include canoeing/kayaking, wildlife viewing, cycling, hiking, birding, equestrian trails, fishing, and hunting.

Total Acreage: 1,329.24

Natural Communities	Acres
Alluvial Forest	339.68
Basin Swamp	169.29
Baygall	43.41
Blackwater Stream	22.89
Bottomland Forest	41.01
Dome Swamp	72.18
Floodplain Swamp	121.22
Mesic Flatwoods	2070.08
Mesic Hammock	15.77
Sandhill	36.79
Seepage Stream	2.47
Upland Hardwood Forest	164.67
Upland Mixed Woodland	16.00
Upland Pine	142.67
Xeric Hammock	8.79

Altered Land Cover	Acres
Abandoned Field/Abandoned Pasture	30.44
Canal/Ditch	0.12
Developed	20.56
Pine Plantation	6.84
Restoration Natural Community	264.47
Successional Hardwood Forest	222.38

Acquisition: Originally purchased from the Nature Conservancy in 1986 with funds from the Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL) program; with several different public agencies managing what is collectively referred to as Big Shoals Public Lands.

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Resource Management Component Objectives

Hydrology

- Assess the park's hydrological restoration needs.
- Restore hydrological conditions to approximately 1.5 acres of blackwater stream and 12 acres of floodplain swamp natural communities.
- Evaluate and mitigate the impacts of soil erosion in the BSPL.

Natural Communities

- Encourage interagency planning meetings/briefings prior to each year's burn season to review burn plans, fuel conditions, resource availability and tactics.
- Maintain 2,000 acres within the optimum fire return interval. Conduct natural community/habitat improvement activities on 15 acres of upland mixed woodland natural community.
- Conduct natural community/habitat improvement activities on 10 acres of sandhill natural community.
- Conduct natural community/habitat improvement activities on 26 acres of mesic flatwoods and upland mixed woodland natural community.
- Conduct natural community/habitat improvement activities on 1 acre of upland mixed woodland natural community.
- Evaluate former Southern Pine Beetle harvest areas to identify appropriate actions to remove/reduce loblolly pine recruitment and re-establish native vegetation.

Imperiled Species

- Update baseline imperiled species occurrence list.
- Continue existing monitoring protocols for 2 imperiled animal species.
- Develop new monitoring for 1 selected imperiled plant species.

Invasive and Nuisance Species

- Annually treat all known populations of invasive plant species in BSSP.
- Prevent the introduction and spread of invasive plants onto the BSSP property.
- Survey the entire BSSP property for invasives at least 2 times over 10 years.
- Implement control measures on 1 invasive animal species in the BSSP property.

Cultural Resources

- Assess/evaluate 20 of 20 recorded cultural resources in the park.
- Compile reliable documentation for all recorded historic and archaeological resources.
- Bring 1 of 22 recorded cultural resources into good condition.

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Land Use Component Objectives

Conceptual Land Use

Big Shoals Day Use Area Entrance

- Coordinate with the county to pave SE 94th Street (Old Godwin Bridge Road).
- Formalize entrance.

Big Shoals Day Use Area

- Construct an 8-to-10 site semi-primitive tent campground.
- Improve wayfinding and interpretation.

Big Shoals Portage

- Move portage onto Hamilton County side.
- Create portage platform for launching/landing.
- Improve signage to better direct paddlers along the path.

Big Shoals Area – Columbia County Easement Improvements

- Stabilize all segments of the easement road to provide reliable access.
- Acquire land containing easement.

Big Shoals Observation Platform- Hamilton County

- Remove vegetation to improve access.

Bell Springs Entrance

- Formalize entrance.
- Improve signage and interpretation.

Bell Springs Access to Florida Scenic Trail

- Improve wayfinding.
- Collaborate with Florida Trails Association to construct and restore sections of Florida Scenic Trail.
- Update signage to direct visitors towards important viewpoints.

Woodpecker Trailhead (Big Shoals Area)

- Pave and formalize the Big Shoals Trailhead.
- Improve wayfinding and interpretation.

Little Shoals Day Use Area

- Construct a permanent restroom.
- Improve wayfinding and interpretation.

Little Shoals Access

- Improve wayfinding and update trail system map.

Old Godwin Bridge

- Stabilize the bank by placing a structure to reduce foot traffic.
- Improve interpretation.

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Optimum Boundary

The park is situated within a patchwork of conservation lands, managed by both the Florida Forest Service and Suwannee River Water Management District. Previously identified optimum boundary parcels include several encompassing the critical Southeast 94th Street entrance road to the Big Shoals Day Use Area, parcels to the east of the Columbia County portion of the park, and parcels to the south and southwest of the park in Columbia and Hamilton counties. Acquisition of these parcels would bolster protection of the waters of the Suwannee River by acquiring additional lands within the watershed. Additional parcels to the northwest would provide an extensive corridor within the patchwork of conservation lands. Several of these parcels are agriculture or silviculture and would require significant restoration efforts.