

Ichetucknee Springs State Park

Planning Region: Suwannee River

County: Columbia and Suwannee counties

Ichetucknee Springs Lease/Management Agreement Number: 2459

Ichetucknee Trace Lease/Management Agreement Number: 4301

Overview

Ichetucknee Springs State Park encompasses 3.5 miles of the Ichetucknee River, an iconic spring-run stream supplied by eight major springs as well as numerous karst seeps from the Floridan aquifer. The park protects large tracts of upland mixed woodland and sandhill, which are critical aquifer recharge areas within the regional springshed and form a remarkable landscape for hiking, wildlife observation, and interpretation of natural areas in Suwannee River region of northeast Florida. The purpose of Ichetucknee Trace Recreation Area is to protect the water quality of Ichetucknee Springs by removing the threat of further mining and groundwater contamination along the area believed to be a major conduit to the springs.

Ichetucknee Springs Acreage: 2,531.87

Ichetucknee Trace Acreage: 659.87

Natural Communities	Acres
Mesic Flatwoods	3.58
Mesic Hammock	7.28
Sandhill	835.33
Sinkhole	0.43
Upland Hardwood Forest	323.39
Upland Mixed Woodland	960.06
Alluvial Forest	69.08
Dome Swamp	2.77
Floodplain Marsh	11.14
Floodplain Swamp	65.67
Sinkhole Lake	1.11
Blackwater Stream	0.53
Spring-run Stream	27.49

Altered Land Cover	Acres
Clearing	1.09
Borrow Area	17.11
Developed	55.77
Pine Plantation	118.03
Spoil Area	16.74
Utility Corridor	15.11

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Acquisition: Ichetucknee Springs State Park was initially acquired on January 6, 1970, with funds from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund (LATF)”. The Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (Trustees) hold fee simple title to the park and on September 4, 1970. the Trustees leased (Lease Number 2459) the property to DRP under a 99-year lease. The current lease will expire on September 3, 2069.

Resource Management Component Objectives

Hydrology

- Conduct/obtain an assessment of the park’s hydrological restoration needs.
- Restore natural hydrological conditions and functions to approximately 10 acres of spring-run stream natural community.
- Evaluate impacts of visitor use on the Ichetucknee River system and mitigate as needed.

Natural Communities

- Within 10 years, have 1460 acres of the park maintained within the optimum fire return interval.
- Conduct habitat/natural community restoration activities on 225 acres of upland pine and upland mixed woodland natural communities.
- Conduct habitat/natural community improvement activities on 85 acres of sandhill community.

Imperiled Species

- Update baseline imperiled species occurrence list
- Continue existing monitoring protocols for 8 selected imperiled animal species in the park.
- Continue existing monitoring protocols for 2 selected imperiled plant species in the park.
- Compile and convert imperiled species distribution and abundance data into electronic format in a geospatial database.

Invasive and Nuisance Species

- Annually treat 20 infested acres of invasive plant species in the park which are dispersed over approximately 453 gross acres.
- Develop and implement measures to prevent the accidental introduction or further spread of invasive exotic plants in the park.
- Implement control measures on a minimum of three nuisance and invasive animal species in the park.

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Cultural Resources

- Assess and evaluate 25 of 55 recorded cultural resources in the park.
- Compile reliable documentation for all recorded historic and archaeological resources.
- Objective: Bring 6 of 58 recorded cultural resources into good condition.

Land Use Component Objectives

Conceptual Land Use

North Use Area

- Improve walkways.
- Add one new bathhouse.
- Add six small picnic pavilions.
- Add one large picnic pavilion.
- Develop new interpretation.
- Repurpose / convert tubing launch.

South Use Area

- Improve walkways.
- Landscape improvements
- Add two new medium picnic pavilions.
- Add a new restroom or bathhouse.

Parkwide Trails

- Extended existing hiking trails

Ichetucknee Trace – Trace Loop Trail

- Develop nature trail with interpretation.

Optimum Boundary

Connectivity of the undeveloped landscape plays a significant role in sustaining the park's wildlife populations and protecting the sensitive springshed. Increasing the acreage of the park and preserving existing connections between the park and other natural areas would support the flora and fauna that make up the natural communities of the park. Establishment of new linkages with other natural areas in the Ichetucknee Springs vicinity is also an essential step in preventing the isolation of the park and a decline in species diversity. Approximately 8,500 acres have been identified as desirable for addition to Ichetucknee Springs State Park. Much of the additional land lies to the northwest of the park and contains significant examples of longleaf pine and xeric oak sandhill community. The area will offer additional protected territory for listed species, such as the southern fox squirrel and the southeastern American kestrel, and other species. Several aquatic caves exist within the area, which have been demonstrated to share hydrological

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connections with the park's springs. The recommended additions north of the park have a significant and demonstrated relationship with the spring system. Potential agricultural or urban development near the park may alter long-term resource conservation and restoration goals. Acquisition of these recommended areas will help to protect surface and groundwater flows into the Ichetucknee Springs and River. Lands immediately adjacent to the park on the east, south, and west boundaries are considered significant for each of the identified reasons. These areas also contain resource elements that will complement the recreational opportunities currently found within Ichetucknee Springs State Park. No lands are considered surplus to the management, conservation, or public access needs of the park at this time. Any additions to the park boundary should ideally connect Ichetucknee Trace to Ichetucknee Springs State Park to form a continuous stretch of conservation lands that protect the subterranean waters that feed the springs.