

History and Nature

Big Shoals Public Lands has been occupied by humans for at least 7,000 years. Native Americans used the shoals' as a quarry site to make stone-chipped tools. They also frequented the sulphur springs in nearby White Springs until European settlers arrived in the early 1800s.

William Brinton Hooker, one of Florida's first cattle kings, settled on the northern shore of the Suwannee in the 1830s. Hooker raised scrub cattle and black seed cotton. He built a ferry across the river in the mid-1830s. In the early 1900s, the land was purchased for logging and turpentine. Longleaf pines in the park still bear the scars of cat-face stripping of bark to collect resins for naval stores production.

Steep ravines and high bluffs surround the Suwannee River, where elevations range from 65 to 135 feet above sea level. When water levels are between 59 and 61 feet, the Big Shoals rapids earn a Class III White Water designation. A smaller set of rapids downstream is called Little Shoals. During much of the year the water is too low to create rapids, but the riverbed and banks display rocky outcrops, overhangs, small caves and sand bars.

The area is known for its rare ravine system and slope forest, which provides dense shade and a cool, moist climate for species more typical of the Southern Appalachian Mountains. Wetland areas include cypress swamps. Pine flatwoods and isolated sandhills are distinguished by towering longleaf pines.

Animal species include box turtles, gopher tortoise, barred owls, red-shouldered hawks, red-tailed hawks, pileated woodpeckers, wild turkeys, white-tail deer, yellow-bellied sapsuckers and timber rattle snakes. The Suwannee River is inhabited by Suwannee cooters, Suwannee bass, Gulf sturgeon and river otters.

Florida State Parks

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

Big Shoals Public Lands

11330 S.E. County 135
White Springs, FL 32096
(386) 397-4331

FloridaStateParks.org

Park Guidelines

- Hours are 8 a.m. until sunset, 365 days a year.
- An entrance fee is required.
- All plants, animals and park property are protected. Collection, destruction or disturbance is prohibited.
- Pets are permitted in designated areas only. Pets must be kept on a hand-held leash no longer than 6 feet and well behaved at all times.
- Alcohol is prohibited.
- Areas designated for hunting are posted. Check bulletin boards and kiosks for the dates of hunting seasons throughout the year.
- A Florida fishing license may be required.
- Become a volunteer. Call (386) 397-2733.
- Florida's state parks are committed to providing equal access to all facilities and programs. Should you need assistance to enable your participation, please contact the ranger station at Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park.

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Created on 12/16



Northeast
Florida

Big Shoals Public Lands

Florida's only Class III White Water Rapids

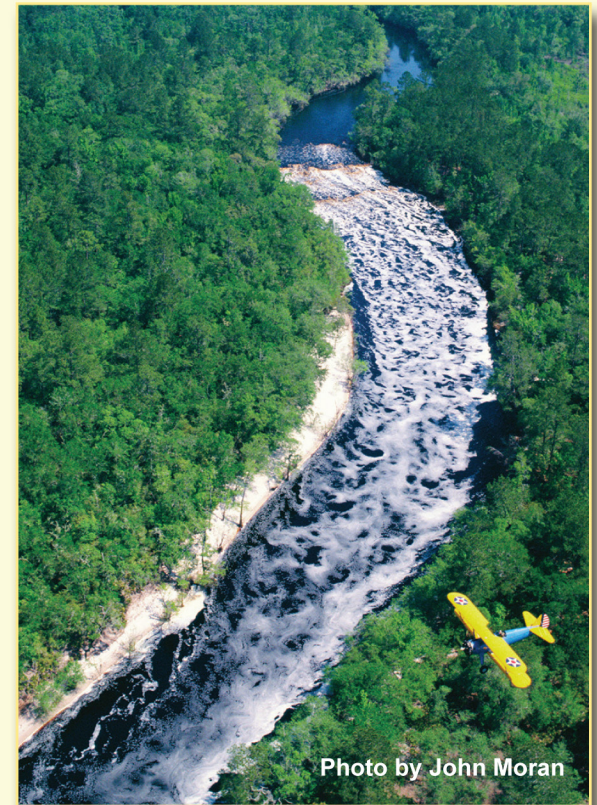


Photo by John Moran

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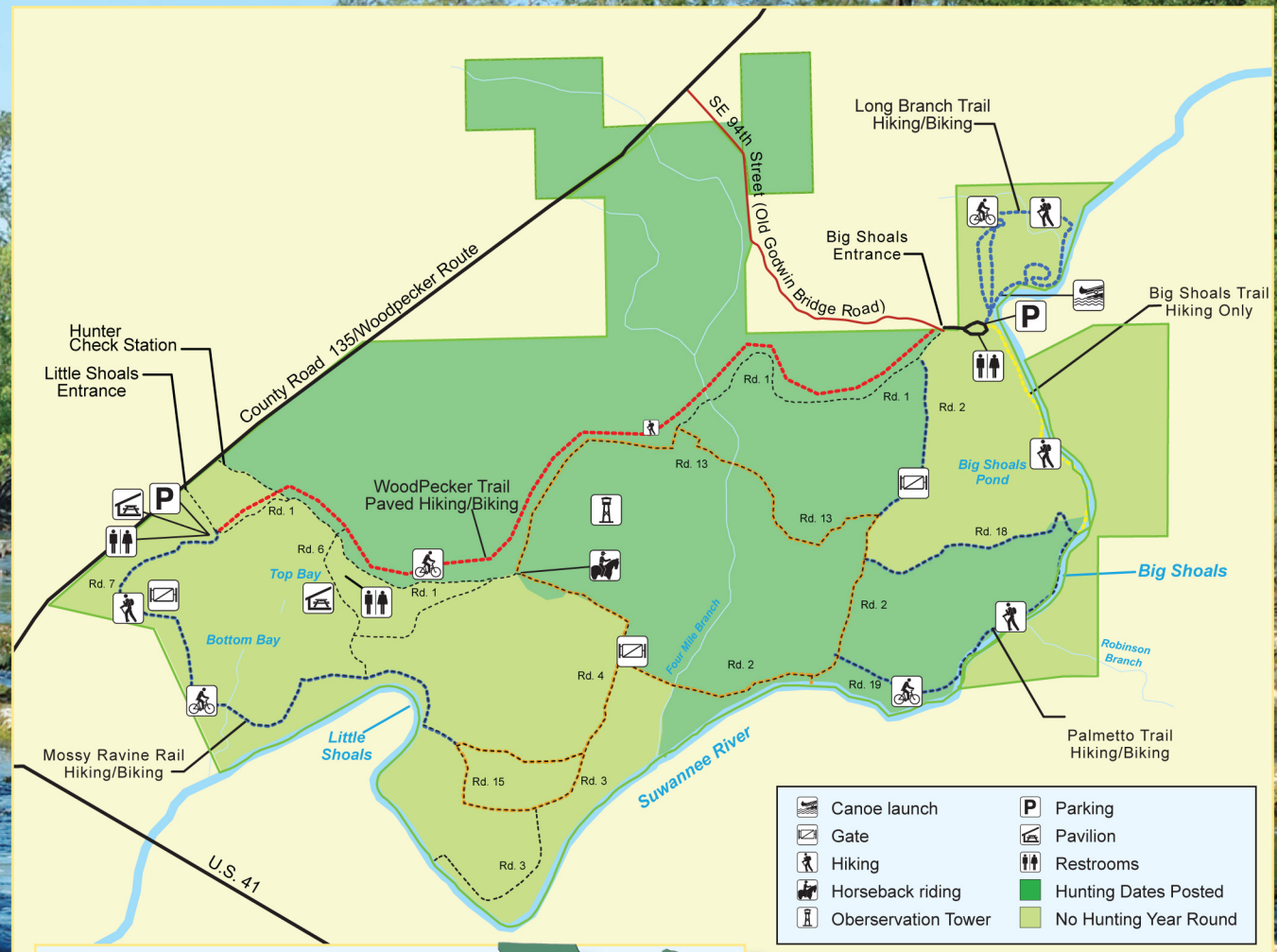
Welcome to ...the Real FloridaSM

Big Shoals Public Lands, along the historic Suwannee River, with beautiful vistas atop riverside bluffs. Big Shoals Public Lands is a partnership among Florida State Parks, Florida Division of Forestry, Suwannee River Water Management District and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The Florida Park Service portion of this land is managed as a state park.

Entrances at Godwin Bridge Road and Little Shoals are linked by the 3.4-mile paved Woodpecker Trail, suitable for **hiking, running and cycling**. Miles of multi-use and single-use trails wind throughout the park and along the river offering **mountain biking, hiking and horseback riding** opportunities.

The river's average current of two to three miles per hour and white sandy beaches have made the Suwannee a popular spot for **canoeing, kayaking and fishing**. The Suwannee has an abundance of freshwater fish, including largemouth bass, black crappie, channel catfish and several types of sunfish and bream.

A **picnic** shelter is available at Little Shoals. Canoe access, picnic tables, grills and restrooms are located at the old Godwin Bridge Road entrance. Limited hunting is permitted inside the Wildlife Management Area for archery, muzzle loading, small game and turkey seasons. Hunting is prohibited in recreational use areas.



Directions

From I-75, take Exit 439 to Hwy. 136 East. Go three miles to U.S. 41. Turn right. Go one mile. Turn left on County Road 135. Little Shoals entrance is about one mile on the right. Continue on County Road 135 for 2.2 miles for Godwin Bridge Road entrance (S.E. 94th St.) on the right. From I-10, take Exit 301. Travel eight miles on U.S. 41 North. Turn right onto County Road 135. Proceed to Shoals entrances.

