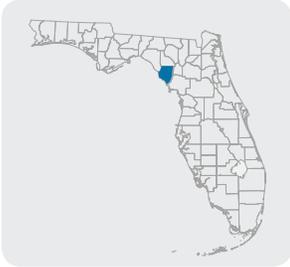


Fanning Springs Restoration

Fanning Springs, FL



Introduction

Forty miles upstream from the Gulf of Mexico along the Suwannee River, Fanning Springs is a state park and warm-water refuge for the Florida manatee. Over time due to development and recreational use, the spring's steep shoreline lost the native vegetation that stabilized its

banks and the once first-magnitude spring was impacted by extensive erosion of sediments. Shallower water in the spring was limiting manatee access.

Objectives

- Increase manatee access to this warm-water natural spring
- Clear eroded sediments from the spring
- Restore Fanning Springs in an environmentally sensitive manner, respecting wildlife and archeological resources and maintaining the park's appeal to visitors

Approach

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, The Nature Conservancy and Florida Department of Environmental Protection developed a plan in 2009 to restore Fanning Springs. From early November 2011 through early January 2012, underwater cleaning of the springs was done by a scuba diver using a hand-held device resembling a giant vacuum cleaner. Hand cleaning was the preferred method to minimize



disturbance to the springs' waters and preserve any artifacts found in the removed sediment. Park staff and volunteers sifted through more than 500 cubic yards of removed sediment and found boards and an ash rake from a former sawmill on the site, as well as coins like a liberty half-dollar and buffalo nickel. With the project completed, Fanning Springs is 2 to 3 feet deeper in some areas and able to provide additional habitat for manatees to escape winter's cold. The \$96,000 project was funded by FWC's Aquatic Habitat Restoration and Enhancement subsection and The Nature Conservancy.

Benefits

The project restored the spring run and made more room available to manatees at Fanning Springs. Conservation of such warm-water habitats is critical to the long-term conservation of the Florida manatee. In this small rural north Florida community, Fanning Springs State Park is a major attraction and a hub of the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail, attracting visitors who come to see manatees, and others using the park for swimming, snorkeling and boating.



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