

Environmental Recommendations and Concerns

The SGRC shall refer to the WWALS Watershed Coalition's Cat Creek Nine Element Plan for environmental concerns and recommendations. The SGRC suggests that interested parties read the Cat Creek Nine Element Plan for more details.

Cat Creek and its feeder creeks seem plagued by fecal contamination based on Withlacoochee River testing by WWALS Watershed Coalition, City of Valdosta, and Lowndes County. The source of the pollution remains unknown; however, the possible sources are: nearby wastewater plants, agricultural and stormwater runoff, livestock, wildlife, and/or nearby septic systems. Not only did multiple organizations detect contamination in Cat Creek, WWALS Watershed Coalition detected PFAS – also known as “forever chemicals” – in the Withlacoochee in 2022.

The Nine Element Plan exists as a result of EPA requirements for grant applications under the Clean Water Act Section 319 Non-point Source Program. Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GA-EPD) imposes similar requirements. Their guidelines require that the following be done for Cat Creek:

- a) Identify causes and sources of pollution*
- b) Estimate pollutant loading into the watershed and the expected load reductions*
- c) Develop management measures to achieve goal*
- d) Identify technical and financial assistance needed to implement plan*
- e) Develop an information/education component*
- f) Develop a project schedule*
- g) Describe the interim, measurable milestones*
- h) Identify indicators to measure progress*
- i) Develop a monitoring component*

The report indicates that Cat Creek has been in GA-EPD total maximum daily loads (TMDL) lists for dissolved oxygen (DO) since 2001. The presence of unknown contaminants also pose as a concern requiring accurate identification of the causes and sources of the pollution (a) to properly mitigate; however, since the exact cause remains unclear, relevant stakeholders must first evaluate the tests to determine potential sources of pollution. Table 3 of the Nine Element Plan on page 8 outlines possible sources of contamination and who to best educate on reducing it (e). Potential sources of coliform bacteria include: human, livestock, pet, wildlife, and agricultural practices. Plus, despite Cat Creek's small size, it