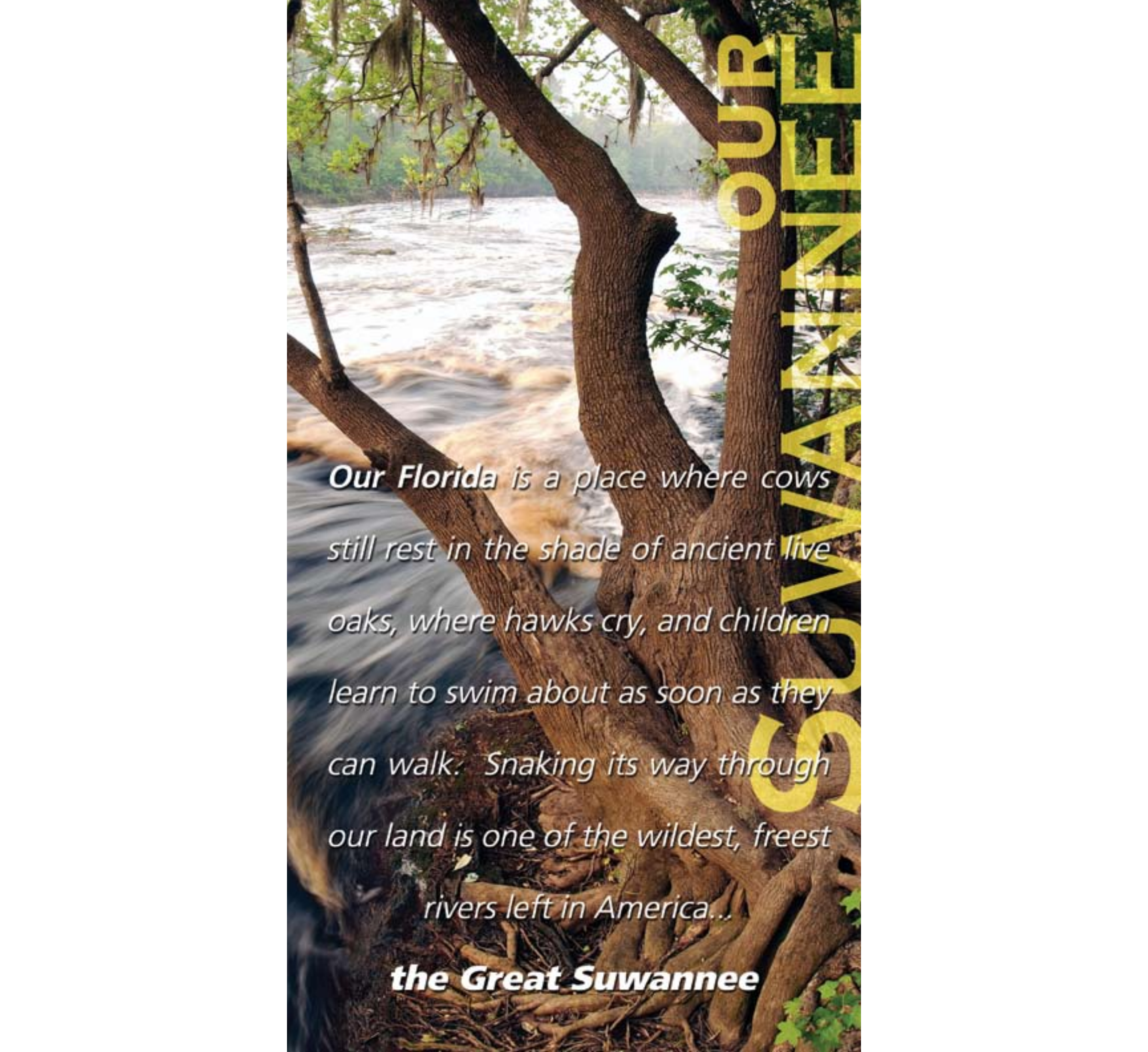


# WATER

...FOR PEOPLE, FOR LIFE



**SUWANNEE**  
RIVER PARTNERSHIP



*Our Florida is a place where cows  
still rest in the shade of ancient live  
oaks, where hawks cry, and children  
learn to swim about as soon as they  
can walk. Snaking its way through  
our land is one of the wildest, freest  
rivers left in America...*

**the Great Suwannee**

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# WE MUSTN'T LET IT SLIP AWAY ...THE LIFE WE ENJOY HERE IN THE SUWANNEE RIVER BASIN

**C**anoes slip silently through its cool waters—some of the cleanest water in the nation—and campers rest on its white sandbars. Bass jump, shedding sparkles; the river and its tributaries are an angler's paradise, boasting 62 freshwater fish species. The basin is heaven for wildlife watchers, too, the realm of the spoonbill and the alligator. Under roofs of water lilies, manatees graze, as gentle as the cows in the pastures. Along the river, chilly springs lie like blue jewels. It's a watery, magical land, our home, unique in all the world, irreplaceable.

## Facing Challenges and Planning for the Future

Today our Suwannee is still one of America's most pristine river basins. But growth and development are happening fast, and it will take constant effort and vigilance to maintain that distinction.

Over the last two decades, nitrate levels in our water have been on the increase. Nitrates are plant nutrients, and in small doses they're harmless, even good. High concentrations are the problem; they damage ecosystems and pose a serious threat to human health.

Nitrate pollution can come from many sources, including fertilizers, septic tanks, and animal wastes.



Since 1999 the Suwannee River Partnership has been working to reduce nitrate levels in this important watershed. The Partnership brings together a diverse group of residents, farmers, scientists, environmental specialists, local governments and businesses to work toward a common goal — protecting the natural resources in the Suwannee River Basin for future generations.

## How the Partnership Works

In the Suwannee River Basin, agriculture is a proud tradition and an important part of our local identity. Tranquil pastureland, shady oaks, pine plantations, and fertile fields have long helped define the special character of this area.

Agriculture depends on clean water and healthy soil. To protect the future of farming in the basin, and the health of the environment, the Partnership helps growers implement best management practices

(BMPs). Best management practices are farming techniques that effectively reduce surface water and groundwater contamination while still allowing productive use of resources. BMPs developed by the Partnership use the best available technology; they are also practical and economically feasible for farmers to implement.



The program is voluntary and incentive-based. Grants and technical assistance help farmers develop and execute successful nutrient management plans. Farmers learn how to compost animal wastes, minimize their use of fertilizers, and better control erosion and runoff.



The Partnership also helps protect area springs and encourages homeowners to use environmentally friendly lawn practices.

## **Reaping the Benefits**

Our way of life here in the Suwannee River Basin is made possible by our heritage

of clean, abundant, flowing water. Water is essential to our environment, our economy, our health, and even our comfort and happiness. Safeguarding this precious heritage for our children and grandchildren is the mission of the Suwannee River Partnership. Our efforts benefit the environment, agriculture, and our communities — now and for the future.

# OUR SUWANNEE IS WORTH DEFENDING AND PROTECTING ...THAT'S WHY WE FORMED THE SUWANNEE RIVER PARTNERSHIP

- The Partnership conducts research to reduce nitrates in groundwater and surface waters.

- It monitors water quality to identify seasonal variations and long-term trends.

- It acquires land and conservation easements from willing sellers to protect water quality and prevent flooding.



- It provides technical assistance for flood mapping, springs restoration, and storm water and wastewater projects.

- It educates the public, teaching residents to make thoughtful choices and become good stewards of our water resources.

## A Measurable Success

Eighty-five percent of the region's dairy farms and 95 percent of its poultry farms have plans in place to implement the Partnership's best management practices. Growing numbers of row crop farms have also signed on.

The Partnership is using the latest technology to help farmers lighten their impact on the environment. As part of the Partnership the Suwannee River Resource Conservation and Development Council's mobile irrigation lab evaluates irrigation system efficiency and provides recommendations for improvement. Since 2000, the Partnership has conducted 337 system evaluations and has completed an

irrigation BMP demonstration on 10 farms. By helping farmers update their irrigation systems and adjust irrigation schedules, we've saved 1.3 billion gallons of water.

The University of Florida - IFAS livestock manure testing lab tests over 500 samples each year and offers proper application recommendations to growers. Since nutrients are now being applied at proper rates, plants are taking them up before they can percolate into the groundwater. The Partnership monitors water quality on an ongoing basis to make sure the BMPs are working.

## Be a Partner in Conservation

Help us spread the word. Tell your friends and neighbors about the Suwannee River Partnership and our efforts to protect water quality in the Suwannee River Basin.

Become involved by doing your part around your home or on your farm. ***If we work together, clean water can be our legacy.***

For more information, please contact:

**Suwannee River  
Partnership**

Darrell Smith, Hugh Thomas, Joel Love, or Glenn Horvath at (386) 362-0431 or Sarah Carte at (386) 362-1725.



[www.suwannee.org](http://www.suwannee.org)

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**Suwannee River Partnership**

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