

WWALS Watershed Coalition

Annual Report, Calendar Year 2021

To be voted on at the July 10, 2022, WWALS Annual Member Meeting

1. Overview

WWALS Vision: *A healthy watershed with clean, swimmable, fishable, drinkable water.*

WWALS Mission (current in 2021): *WWALS Watershed Coalition advocates for conservation and stewardship of the Withlacoochee, Willacoochee, Alapaha, Little, Santa Fe, and Suwannee River watersheds in south Georgia and north Florida through education, awareness, environmental monitoring, and citizen activities.*

(updated February 2022): *WWALS advocates for conservation and stewardship of the surface waters and groundwater of the Suwannee River Basin and Estuary, in south Georgia and north Florida, among them the Withlacoochee, Willacoochee, Alapaha, Little, Santa Fe, and Suwannee River watersheds, through education, awareness, environmental monitoring, and citizen activities.*

2. Officers, Board and Staff

Board members are elected at the annual meeting each summer. By electing new board members mid year, they have the opportunity to have an annual budget in place, with programs already in progress before having to make large financial decisions at the approval of the budget in January.

At the July Members meeting, no new board members were elected. Shelby Miller and Tom Potter were reelected to the board. At the subsequent board meeting, Tom H. Johnson Jr. was re-elected President, Tom Potter was re-elected Senior Vice President, Bret Wagenhorst was elected Secretary, Shelby Miller was re-elected Treasurer and Dave Hetzel was re-elected Ambassador. Gretchen Quarterman continued as Executive Director to handle business, a staff position and continues to be unpaid. John S. Quarterman continues as Suwannee Riverkeeper to do advocacy, which is a paid staff position. See below about the need to raise funds for full pay for both staff positions in anticipation of eventual hiring of successors.

The board makeup in 2021 was as follows:

Post	Name January/June Name July/December	Office / Committee Chair	Board Term Expiration
1	Vacant		2024
2	Sara Jones (elected October 2021)	Nominating, Songwriting, PR	2024
3	Tom Potter	Senior Vice President	2024
4	Bret Wagenhorst	Secretary	2023
5	Trudy Cole	Membership, Grants	2023
6	Vacant		2023
7	Tom H Johnson Jr. (resigned September)	President, Songwriting	2022
8	Laura D'Alisera		2022
9	Dave Hetzel	Ambassador (Vice President)	2022
10	Shelby Miller	Treasurer	2024

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3. 2021 Goals

The goals continue to reflect work done in 2016 to guide the organization.

WWALS [Goals adopted 2 October 2016](#) are overarching items which help us achieve our vision and mission.

1. Education of general public about conservation and stewardship of WWALS watershed.
 - a. Outreach to youth, teachers, community leaders through outings, art contests, etc.
 - b. One time per year hold workshop for educators and adults
 - c. One time per year hold workshop for youth
 - d. One time per year art project open to public, private, and home schoolers.
2. Act as a knowledge resource about physical, biological and natural resources to, and about, our community.
 - a. Maintain an Inventory of resources of health and science (geology, biology, hydrology) which support our educational activities.
 - b. The inventory will include native and invasive species information, maps, information about existing organizations (NRCS, University Extensions, Water Management Districts, etc)
 - c. Record what we see now and continue to record to see if things change (photos, water quality)
 - d. Develop a systematic way to store this inventory of information.
 - e. Commission WWALS Science Committee - Tom Potter to chair
3. Engage with local agencies on routine water quality testing
 - a. Find out what is happening now
 - b. Identify missing sampling (stormwater, others?)
 - c. Work with farm agencies (FSA, Farm Bureau, NRCS, Extension Offices) to learn what they do and present what we do and figure out how we can work together.
4. Develop and maintain documentation relevant to our watershed
 - a. Maps, water trails, brochures, photos, blog
 - b. (this somewhat overlaps with #2, however we develop documentation that is specific to WWALS projects, and views which will then be stored used by #2.)
5. Identify and address threats to the WWALS Watershed
6. Engage our community in outdoor activities. outings, water trails, fishing tournaments, geocaching, hiking, cleanups, etc.
 - a. Clean ups are stewardship in action.
7. Raise money to fund organization on an ongoing basis
 - a. develop a fundraising plan
 - b. finalize RIVERKEEPER® application (completed 2016; license signed December 2016)
 - c. approve budget

4. Financial Report

The beginning balance in all accounts on January 1, 2021 was \$19,206.17. The ending balance in all accounts as of December 31, 2021 was \$17,629.66. Our income came from a mix of membership, grants, and fundraisers. Our total expenditures were \$29,232.37. WWALS operated at a deficit of \$-1,576.51. WWALS needs to figure out a sustainable income stream.

The amount paid to the Suwannee RIVERKEEPER® is not a living wage and WWALS needs to figure out some way to increase our income so that WWALS can actually pay a person, as well as to pay a full-time Executive Director. A variety of general bills and expenses were paid including Georgia and Florida corporate fees, liability insurance, Directors and Officers Insurance, water quality testing supplies purchases, website renewal, office supplies and postage, festival booths. The Paycheck Protection Program loan that was received in 2020 for \$2083.00 was completely forgiven and there is no outstanding balance.

The Big Little River Paddle Race (BLRPR) scheduled for April, was cancelled because of bad weather. The BLRPR raised \$1500 through sponsorships, thanks to Dr. Bret Wagenhorst and Southwell Medical, and the money was shared with Friends of Reed Bingham State Park (FORB). WWALS had some successful on-line fundraisers around Earth Day in April and GeorgiaGivesNow in early May, as well as Georgia Day of Giving after Thanksgiving. The Songwriting contest went on as scheduled, raising just over \$750. WWALS again used the outdoor art park venue at the Turner Center for the Arts in Valdosta, rather than an indoor venue because of COVID-19. The WWALS Boomerang paddle race in the fall, coordinated by Bobby McKenzie, raised approximately \$650 in sponsorships and entry fees. See the attached Statement of Activity for a detailed report.

WWALS is listed at GuideStar and fundraises on-line through gagives.org, Facebook, and others.

WWALS continues using EventBrite to sell tickets as it streamlines the issuance of receipts and tickets and the fee is passed to the ticket buyer rather than being paid by WWALS.

Attached to the Annual Report are the following: Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Activity January 2021 - December 2021. As reported above, in fiscal year 2021, WWALS ran a small deficit.

5. Meetings

5.1. Meetings and Events Organized by WWALS

WWALS held four quarterly board meetings in 2021. All board meetings were held by Zoom. The Annual Members meeting in 2021 was held on July 18, 2021 by Zoom. The WWALS Committees were active, meeting primarily by zoom, with much of their coordination done via email lists.

6. Suwannee Riverkeeper Report, John S. Quarterman

The first requirement of the license from WATERKEEPER® Alliance to WWALS for the trademark Suwannee RIVERKEEPER® is to "1. Employ a full-time, paid, non-governmental public advocate for the identified water body, who identifies him or herself with the Riverkeeper mark and who serves as the primary spokesperson for the water body." Other requirements include "4. Develop a grassroots constituency" and "7. Identify and respond to citizen complaints," and thus the Suwannee Riverkeeper is involved in most of the Goals enumerated above. Another is "8. Advocate and enforce compliance with environmental laws, including the use of litigation and administrative challenges against polluters in appropriate circumstances." WWALS has litigated, but given that we have fewer specific point-source pollution problems than in most watersheds, we have always preferred other means. So the Suwannee Riverkeeper spends a great deal of time on politics and negotiation.

Most of the issues that the Suwannee Riverkeeper deals with are listed on the WWALS website:

<https://wwals.net/issues/> Some are investigations, such as increasing ownership of agriculture, including by Bill Gates' for-profit investment arm. Most are things WWALS opposes, such as sewage spills (Valdosta, Quitman, Tifton, and Ray City, GA; Starke, FL; etc.), trash, coal ash, PFAS, wood pellet plants, fracking, pipelines, Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) export, mining (phosphate in Florida and titanium both states), bottled water and other single-use plastics, and unnecessary toll roads: much Florida time spent on those last two. Suwannee Riverkeeper reports on most of that advocacy in the *Tannin Times* monthly newsletter, with details in blog posts on wwals.net, distributed through facebook, Instagram, and twitter.

Opposing a titanium strip mine too near the Okefenokee Swamp involved contacting Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GA-EPD) Vice Director John Eunice, a former Valdosta City Council Member, lobbying the Georgia Governor through a Waterkeeper Alliance action alert, getting Waterkeepers Florida to oppose that mine, lobbying the statehouse delegation, nominating Okefenokee NWR for the UNESCO World Heritage List, op-eds in newspapers, discussion at Southern Georgia Regional Commisison, etc. Got a statement from elected Sen. Jon Ossoff, "The Okefenokee is a sacred natural resource. It is a wildlife refuge that must be protected."

WWALS supports projects beneficial to the watersheds in both states, such as solar power, water trails, and water quality testing. Suwannee Riverkeeper convinced the GA-EPD to redesignate many miles of the Alapaha and Withlacoochee Rivers as Recreational instead of Fishing. Suwannee Riverkeeper got trash traps and water trails included in the Lowndes County Comprehensive Plan, and water trails and all relevant rivers included in several other county Comprehensive Plans over the years. At the suggestion of a consultant for the Valdosta-Lowndes County Parks and Recreation Authority (VLPRA), as input to VLPRA Master Plan update, Suwannee Riverkeeper drafted a WWALS Vision for Lowndes County waterways. That Vision document was later incorporated whole into the VLPRA Master Plan, which even recommends more than the one Troupville River Camp that the WWALS Vision indicated.

The most far-reaching Suwannee Riverkeeper Project is Right to Clean Water as a state constitutional amendment. Suwannee Riverkeeper supports the ongoing Florida statewide petition movement, and convinced Waterkeepers Florida to support it in 2021. Suwannee Riverkeeper formed a Georgia statewide committee including three other Riverkeepers in preparation for a bill in the Georgia legislature in some future year to get a referendum on the ballot.

7. Committee Reports

7.1. Advisory Committee Report, Dave Hetzel, Chair

The Advisory committee did not meet in 2021. The members of the advisory committee remained engaged through personal emails and phone calls.

7.2. Events Committee Report, Eileen Box, Chair

The Events committee did not have any formal meetings in 2021 but the e-mail list traffic kept the group moving forward. The WWALS festival booth was back in action at several festivals during the year, including the Azalea Festival in Valdosta, the Hahira HoneyBee, the Brooks County Skillet Fest and at the WWALS Songwriting Contest in August. Outreach through the festival booth was strong and several new volunteers helped out. The group began work on a *Right to Clean Water* idea for a presentation or seminar. WWALS had a very successful Juneteenth event, in conjunction with the Macedonia Foundation of Brooks County, GA at Reed Bingham State Park to offer kayak and canoe experiences for people who had never tried these sorts of vessels.

7.3. Executive Committee Report

The entire board is sufficiently accustomed to making decisions via email that the Executive Committee did not meet in 2021. This committee is made up of WWALS officers.

7.4. Grant Writing Committee Report, Gretchen Quarterman, Chair

WWALS applied for several grants in 2021. A Georgia Power grant was received for the second year in a row for Water Quality Testing. While the grant amount was smaller than the first year, the grant amount made it possible to continue the program. The Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program was not applied for, however the City of Valdosta and the County of Lowndes are working with landowner Helen Tapp to obtain the *Land Between the Rivers* for a park. WWALS applied for a grant through the Subaru Foundation, but was not selected. WWALS applied for a grant for trash traps through a Coca Cola Grant, but was not selected. The Packaging Corporation of America (PCA) did supply a sponsorship of the WWALS Boomerang in October. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA-DNR) educational Recreational Trails Program grant was used by the Trails Committee to publish z-fold brochures and to print and plant at-water and road signs.

7.5. Membership Committee Report, Gretchen Quarterman, Chair

WWALS Membership in 2021 remained about constant even though there was a pandemic! At the end of 2021 WWALS had less than a dozen monthly donors. The complimentary (comp) registrations were from the songwriting contest and were not approved until after the October quarterly board meeting. Now, songwriting contestants and judges are automatically given an annual membership. Also, members of the WWALS Advisory Committee are also now given annual memberships.

Month	Year	New	Renewal	Comp	Monthlly	Total
1	2021	5	12		17	17
2	2021	6	12		18	35
3	2021	7	6		13	48
4	2021	7	13		20	68
5	2021	9	2		11	79
6	2021	5	1		6	85
7	2021	14	7		21	106
8	2021	12	4		16	122
9	2021	2	1		3	125
10	2021	9	2		11	136
11	2021	8	4	12	24	160
12	2021	14	19		33	193

7.6. Nominating Committee Report - 2021, Sara Jay Jones, Chair

In 2021, the Nominating committee made the following recommendations.

Recommendations to the WWALS Membership 18 July 2021

Annual Meeting

The Nominating Committee recommended for board members:

- Josh Duncan (new)
- Shelby Miller (three year term)
- Tom Potter (three year term)

Recommendations to the WWALS for the 18 July 2021 Quarterly

Board Meeting

The Nominating Committee recommended for officers:

- President: Tom H. Johnson Jr.
- Senior Vice President: Tom Potter
- Secretary: Josh Duncan
- Treasurer: Shelby Miller
- WWALS Ambassador: Dave Hetzel

Recommendations for Committee Chairs:

- Outings: No one to suggest at this time

The Nominating Committee recommends for Advisory Committee, per WWALS ByLaws, Article V, Section 7:

- None to suggest at this time.

The Nominating Committee recommends to reaffirm the

Nominating Committee with the following members:

- *Tom H. Johnson, Jr., Chair, Laura D'Alisera, John S. Quarterman.*

Please also note the

WWALS Committee Participation Policy, Policy # 2016-10-12:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1liJ6efQFS_eF8QWMCw3rxKqqgQV1TzPdHMF16FFLOaq0/edit

Policy Purpose:

To ensure that all committee members are WWALS members and that all Board Members are familiar with WWALS committee structures and procedures.

Policy Details:

1. All members of WWALS committees must be WWALS members.
2. WWALS Committee Chairs are not required to be board members, however they must sign the WWALS Gift Disclosure, WWALS Conflict of Interest Disclosure and WWALS Employee Whistleblower Policies. Additionally, they must also abide by the WWALS Insurance / Driver's License Policy # 2015-07-05
3. To be considered for WWALS Board membership, a person must first be a member of and regularly participate on a WWALS committee.

Josh Duncan declined to be elected to the WWALS board.

Bret Wagenhorst was elected as Secretary for a one year term.

Tom H. Johnson Jr., Tom Potter, and Shelby Miller were elected as President, Senior Vice President, and Treasurer, respectively.

Tom H. Johnson Jr. resigned from the WWALS Board and all committees in September 2021.

Sara Jones was elected to the WWALS Board in October 2021 and became the chair of the nominating committee.

7.7. Outings Committee Report, Chair Vacant

WWALS continued with its outdoor education mission by holding monthly river paddles, monthly full moon paddles and special trash pickup events. All of these events are well attended and enjoyed by the community. They produce a steady stream of \$10 outings fees and new and renewal memberships, as well as committee and even board members.

7.8. Personnel Committee Report: Chair Shelby Miller

In 2021, WWALS had an opportunity to work with Moody Airforce Base in the outplacement training of Airman Bobby McKenzie. Airman McKenzie was paid by MAFB from mid-May through mid-September, while working full time for WWALS. This partnership enabled WWALS to draw attention to several water related issues in the basin. The Personnel Committee met with the Riverkeeper and Executive Director in September to discuss some difficult issues. The Riverkeeper was not paid a living wage in 2021. The Executive Director was not paid at all in 2021. The lack of living wages is a significant issue in attracting new staff.

7.9. Public Relations Committee Report, John S. Quarterman, Chair

In 2021, the PR committee wrote and sent 12 monthly *Tannin Times* newsletters to members, plus many blog posts on wwals.net, distributed through facebook, Instagram, and twitter,. The Riverkeeper and Executive Director were interviewed on the radio, and for television and newspaper articles several times. Press releases were sent to media outlets <https://wwals.net/about/news/press-releases/> plus op-eds, and WWALS was covered over forty times. <https://wwals.net/about/news/news-2021/>

7.10. Science Committee Report, Tom Potter, Chair

Analyzed WWALS and other water quality test results and confirmed that E. coli bacteria levels exceeding levels acceptable for water contact recreation typically followed precipitation exceeding one inch. Analyzed DNA marker and chemical tracer test results from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) that WWALS helped convince FDEP to collect and to provide to WWALS. Found ruminant DNA markers high, which points at the 10,000 dairy and beef cattle in Brooks County, Georgia, explaining high E. coli results on Okapilco Creek coming out of that county and at Knights Ferry Boat Ramp, first test site downstream on the Withlacoochee River. DNA testing by the WWALS testing committee included results high for both ruminants and swine, indicating that swine, in particular feral hogs living near the river, may also be a source of E. coli bacteria. Attended Georgia Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Planning Council meeting, had many discussions with the Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC), and attended many weekly teleconferences of Waterkeepers Florida, working with WKFL on biosolids and PFAS.

7.11. Songwriting Contest Committee Report, Laura D'Alisera, Chair

Committee Members: Tom Johnson, Chair; John S. Quarterman (JSQ), Angela Duncan, Josh Duncan, J.J. Rolle, David Rodock, Bobby McKenzie, Laura D'Alisera, Scotti Jay, Sara Jones, Eileen Box

The Committee would like to thank WWALS board for the incredible support to host the Fourth Suwannee Riverkeeper Songwriting Contest held Saturday, August 23. It was an excellent event, held for the second year at the Turner Art Center. Approximately 100 people were in attendance, which is a good turnout after another swell of Covid-19 in the spring. Contest ended in the black, (\$500) thanks in large part to Turner Center returning a portion of the rental fee and the Overall Prize Winner Billy, "Sweet William" Ennis,

donating his recording studio fee to WWALS. Much appreciated! Sponsorships raised \$2100, an increase over the 2020 contest funding. There were nine contestants, by the time we closed the application process. The contest program went smoothly. COVID-19 protocols of social distancing applied, but inconsistent with mask wearing. Judges performed in addition to the contestants. The 2020 contest winner, Scott Perkins, played as headliner. At the wrap up meeting of the 2021 Songwriting Contest, it was recommended that the contest be continued in 2022. The Committee nominated Angela Duncan to serve as the 2022 Songwriting Committee Chair. Laura forwarded a motion to the WWALS Board to adopt the Committee recommendation. The WWALS Board created the 2022 Songwriting Committee with Angela Duncan as Chair so she could form her committee and begin sponsorship solicitation.

7.12 Testing Committee Report, Suzanne Hall, Chair

WWALS Water Quality Testing results were used by the Science Committee to determine some contamination sources, and factored into GA-EPD's decision to redesignate many miles of the Withlacoochee and Alapaha Rivers from Fishing to Recreational. Thanks to the Georgia Power Foundation for a grant that helps. WWALS E.D. Gretchen Quarterman as a Georgia Adopt-A-Stream testing trainer continues to train new testers. WWALS regularly tests up to a dozen sites on the Withlacoochee, Little, and Alapaha Rivers on Thursdays and publishes a report on Friday before the weekend, including updating many "beaches" in the international water quality smart phone app Swim Guide, as well as recording results in Georgia Adopt-A-Stream's online database. See <https://wwals.net/issues/testing/>

7.13. Trails Committee Report, Chair Vacant

Numerous updates to online water trail maps and web pages for both Florida and Georgia. Designed and printed z-fold brochures with maps, access point tables with distances, and numerous pictures and text, for both the Alapaha River Water Trail (ARWT) and Withlacoochee and Little River Water Trail (WLRWT) using a grant from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA-DNR). That grant for at-water signs for both water trails, which WWALS printed and planted. The grant paid for WLRWT road signs, which WWALS purchased from the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). Some were planted by GDOT, others by WWALS: special thanks to the Cook County Clerk and Commissioners for a permission letter to GDOT. Discussions with SRWMD and Hamilton County about Florida water trail signs.



also paid

WWALS WLRWT map helped convince Lowndes County Commission not to close Wells Road and its Little River access at Folsom Bridge.

Numerous water trail recommendations in addition to Troupville River Camp and Nature Park included in a WWALS Vision for Lowndes County Waterways, incorporated whole into Valdosta-Lowndes County Parks and Recreation Authority (VLPR) Master Plan. One Valdosta-Lowndes, a consortium for quality of life and economic development, listed Troupville River Camp as its number one project. Assisted landowner Helen Tapp in writing her conservation plan, which requires consultation with WWALS about River Camp and gives WWALS access to the planned educational pavilion.

With GOPRO 360 camera loaned from Fishviews and another WWALS bought, published 360-degree transits of several stretches of WWALS rivers in Georgia and Florida.

Added two Florida distributaries to WLRWT map thanks to explorations by WWALS members, and published bridge explorations and historical summaries by Dr. Ken Sulak.

7.14. Watershed Issues Committee Report, John S. Quarterman, Chair

Helped expose Strom LNG as a ghost company with no permission to export through Port Tampa Bay and opposed even by the Citrus County Commission, while it sent counter-factual semi-annual reports to U.S. DoE Office of Fossil Energy. Strom no longer even sends reports to DoE FE, so maybe it's finally dead. Tracked an LNG tanker docked in Port Tampa Bay despite that Port's express rejection of LNG exports from there. Lobbied Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to resume oversight of small inland Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) facilities; got some press coverage. Drafted a petition to FERC for Rulemaking on same. Thanks to Committee member Cecile Scofield for her leadership on all this, and to Maxine Conner and others.

8. Conclusion

Focus continues on projects of conservation and stewardship (water trails and cleanups), education (outings and events), and advocacy (including opposition to pipelines, LNG export, and fracking, phosphate and titanium mines, coal ash, and unnecessary toll roads, as well as promotion of solar power), with fundraising to support those projects and to fully fund the Suwannee RIVERKEEPER® and an Executive Director.

