SUWANNEE RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board

FROM: Robbie McKinney, Hydrologic Program Manager, Office of Water Resources

THRU: Hugh Thomas, Executive Director

DATE: April 30, 2026

RE: April 2026 Hydrologic Conditions Report

RAINFALL

- Districtwide average rainfall for the month was 0.88", which was about 74 percent lower than the 1932-2025 average of 3.38" (Table 1, Figure 1). The 12-month period ending April 30 reflected a Districtwide rainfall deficit of 20.22", which was an increase to the 19.98" deficit seen at the end of March. District counties ranged from just over 0.5" to 1.4" of rainfall on average, with parts of Taylor, Suwannee, Columbia, Hamilton, Union, Gilchrist, and Dixie counties receiving more than 2.5 inches of rainfall (Figure 2).

- Overall, a 12-month rainfall deficit was present in all river basins, with the Aucilla and Coastal basins increasing in deficit by the end of April (Figure 3). A small area in the southern Waccasassa Basin showed a deficit of less than 8 inches. Portions with deficits greater than 29" were also observed in the Aucilla, Santa Fe, and Suwannee basins. Each river basin increased its 3-month rainfall deficit by the end of April (Figure 4). No surpluses were seen over the past 3 months, and each river basin had areas measuring anywhere from less than 6" to more than 9" of deficit. Sections with greater than 9" of rainfall deficit can be seen in all 5 of the basins.

SURFACE WATER

- **Rivers:** Most of the river gages in Figure 5 finished the month in the extremely low (<10^{th} percentile) flow range, with only the Ichetucknee River showing below normal (10^{th} – 25^{th} percentile) flows. New long-term daily minimum flow records were set in April at gages on the Suwannee (Ellaville and Branford), Santa Fe (Worthington Springs), Econfina (Perry), and Withlacoochee (Pinetta) rivers. Additionally, other river gages throughout the District and South Georgia saw much below normal flows both at the beginning and end of the month (Figure 6). Gages on the Santa Fe (Worthington Springs and Graham), New River, and St. Marys (North Prong) ended April with zero flow.

- **Lakes**: Water levels decreased at each of the monitored District lakes this month (Figure 7). Water levels at Governor Hill, Sneads Smokehouse, Hampton Lake, and Lake Crosby were below the equipment sensor this month due to ongoing drought conditions. The median decrease in stage across measured lakes was about 0.4', and each of the monitored lakes ended April below their long-term averages.

- **Springs**: Flow measurements were made at 16 springs in April by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), District staff, and contractors. Flows at Manatee Springs ranged from extremely low to normal throughout April (Figure 8). Similarly, Fanning Springs saw below normal to normal flows throughout the month (Figure 9).

GROUNDWATER

Upper Floridan Aquifer (UFA) levels across the District ranged from normal (25th – 75th percentile) to extremely low (<10th percentile) levels this month (Figure 10). Forty-two of the monitored long-term District wells were listed in the extremely low category at the end of the month. Overall, groundwater levels decreased by a median of about 0.6' since the end of March and ended April with a Districtwide average around the 12th percentile.

Each of the 12 groundwater index wells was below long-term averages at the end of the month (Figure 11). The well in Hamilton County near Jasper set a new monthly record low for April. Long-term District UFA well levels ended April in either the normal, low, or very low categories (Figure 12a). The monitored long-term wells with records that extend back to at least 1964 showed decreasing water levels this month relative to last month (Figure 12b).

CLIMATE AND DROUGHT OUTLOOK

ENSO-neutral conditions are currently present and favored through April to June 2026 with an 80% chance. From May to July 2026, El Niño is favored to emerge with a 61% chance and will persist through at least the end of 2026.

The NOAA three-month seasonal outlook suggests above normal temperatures and above normal precipitation within the District from May through July 2026.

The U.S. Drought Monitor report released on Thursday, May 7th shows the majority of the District covered by Exceptional Drought (D4) with smaller areas to the east and south with Extreme Drought (D3).

CONSERVATION

A Modified Phase II Water Shortage containing both voluntary and mandatory reductions in water use is currently in effect for the entire District. The Modified Phase II Water Shortage Order was approved at the April 14, 2026, Suwanee River Water Management District Governing Board meeting. This water shortage order includes updated rules regarding landscape and other irrigation. Therefore, the District website (http://www.mysuwanneeriver.com) should be consulted for current guidance on water use while the water shortage is in effect.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Hydrologic Conditions Report is a monthly combined effort between the Offices of Water Resources and Hydrologic Data Services data collection and review programs. Acknowledgment is made to the following staff for their contributions to the timely production of this report:

- Data Collection: Christian Holton, Matthew Jordan, Dylan Mock, Morgan Pearson, Kevin Posada, and Vince Robinson
- QA/QC and Reporting: Susie Hetrick, Robbie McKinney, Brandi Sistrunk, and Mitch Valerio
- Administrative Support/Document Preparation/IT: Paul Buchanan, Bo Cameron, Tyler Jordan, and Ashley Kirby.

This report is compiled in compliance with Chapter 40B-21.211, Florida Administrative Code, using rainfall (gage-adjusted radar-derived estimates), groundwater (122 wells), surface water (35 stations), and general information such as drought indices and forecasts. Data are provisional and updated as revised data become available. Data are available at http://www.mysuwanneeriver.com/507/Water-Data-Portal or upon request.

Table 1: Nexrad Monthly Rainfall Totals by County (inches)

County	April 2026	April Average*	Month % of Normal	Total Last 12 Months	Annual % of Normal*
Alachua	0.56	3.15	18%	31.95	61%
Baker	0.59	3.39	18%	30.59	58%
Bradford	0.62	2.98	21%	29.91	58%
Columbia	1.42	3.47	41%	33.44	63%
Dixie	0.87	3.37	26%	36.91	64%
Gilchrist	0.73	3.30	22%	32.33	59%
Hamilton	1.24	3.70	34%	33.49	64%
Jefferson	0.59	4.05	15%	29.34	52%
Lafayette	0.71	3.53	20%	36.18	65%
Levy	0.88	3.07	29%	41.55	74%
Madison	1.00	3.85	26%	30.53	57%
Suwannee	1.08	3.66	30%	33.84	64%
Taylor	0.59	3.63	16%	36.16	64%
Union	0.60	3.25	18%	31.18	59%

*Based on PRISM LT81 monthly rainfall averages by county (1927-2024)

April 2026 District Average	0.88
April Long-Term Average (1932-2025)	3.38
Historical 12-month Average (1932-2025)	54.64
Past 12-Month Total	34.42
12-Month Rainfall **Surplus**/Deficit	**-20.22**

Figure 1: Comparison of District-wide Monthly Rainfall

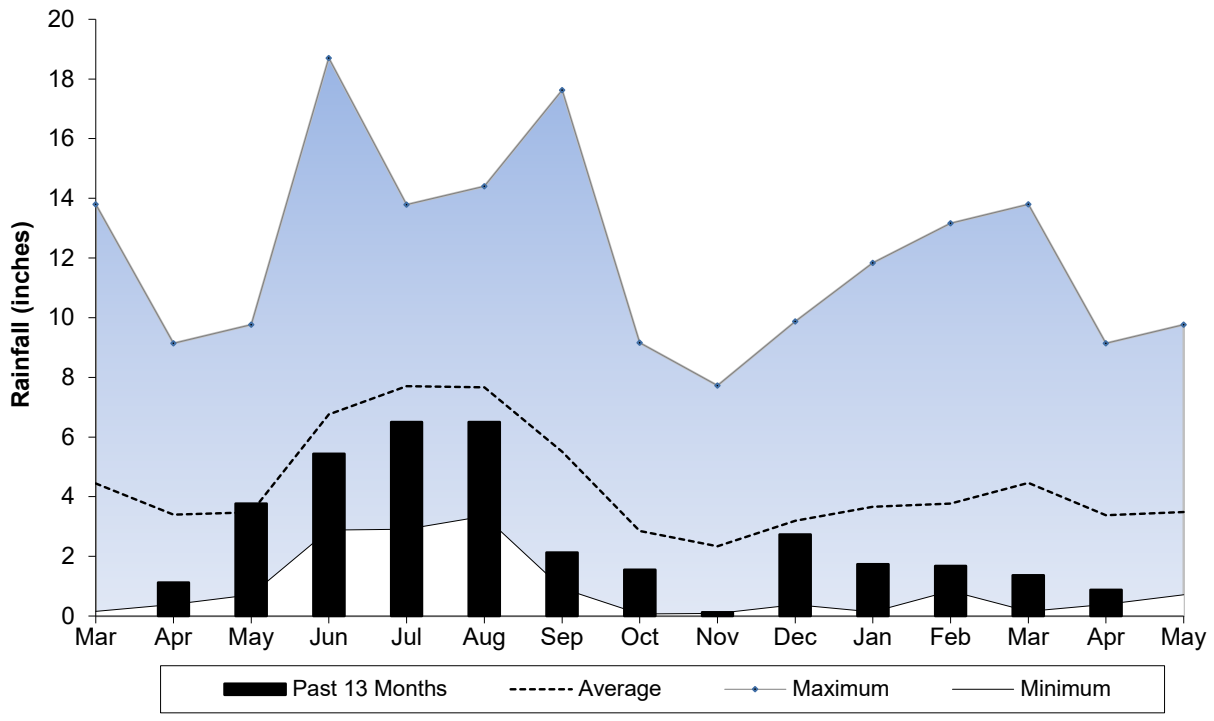


Figure 2: April 2026 SRWMD Gage-adjusted Radar Rainfall

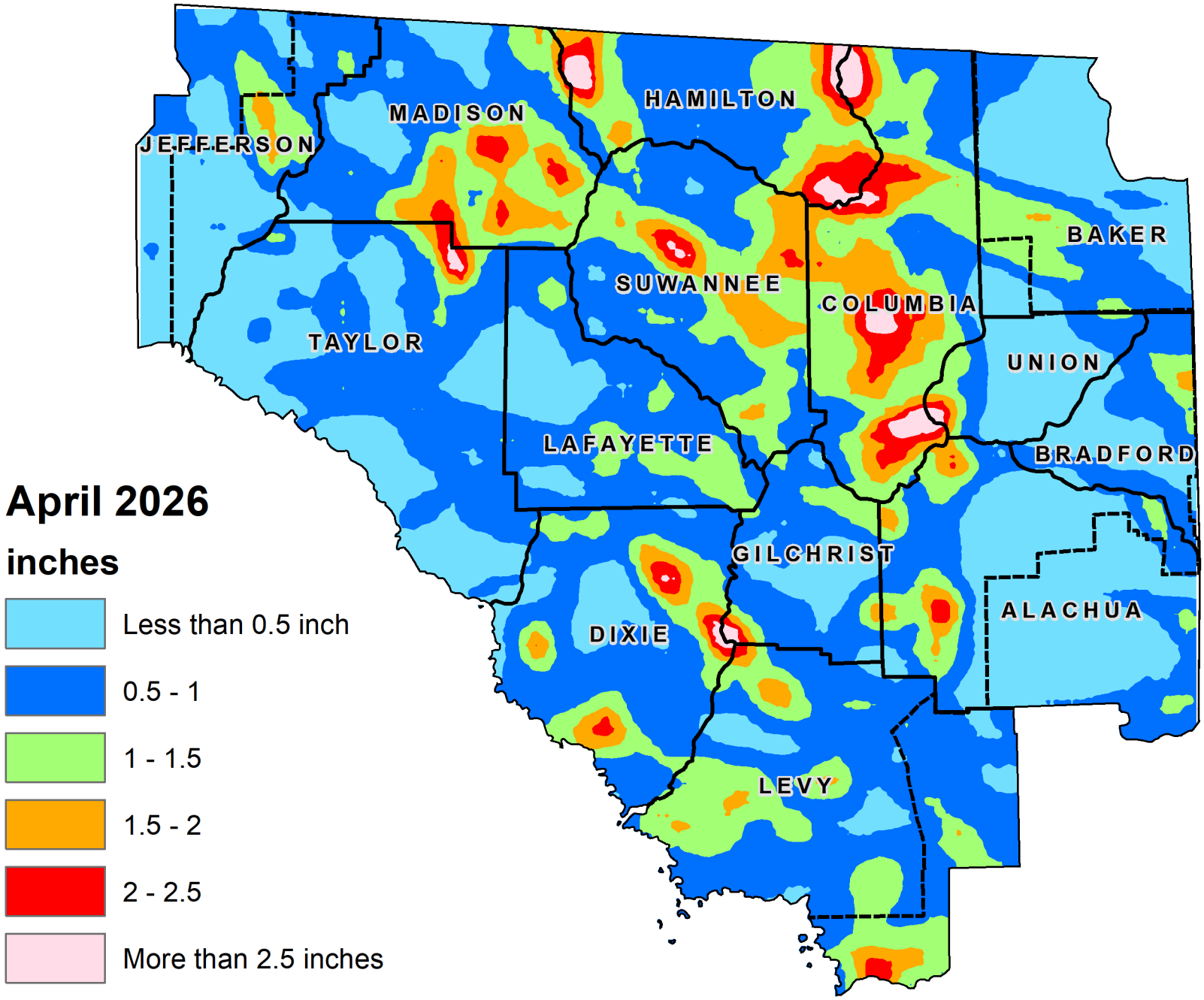


Figure 3: 12 - Month Rainfall Surplus/Deficit by River Basin through April 30, 2026

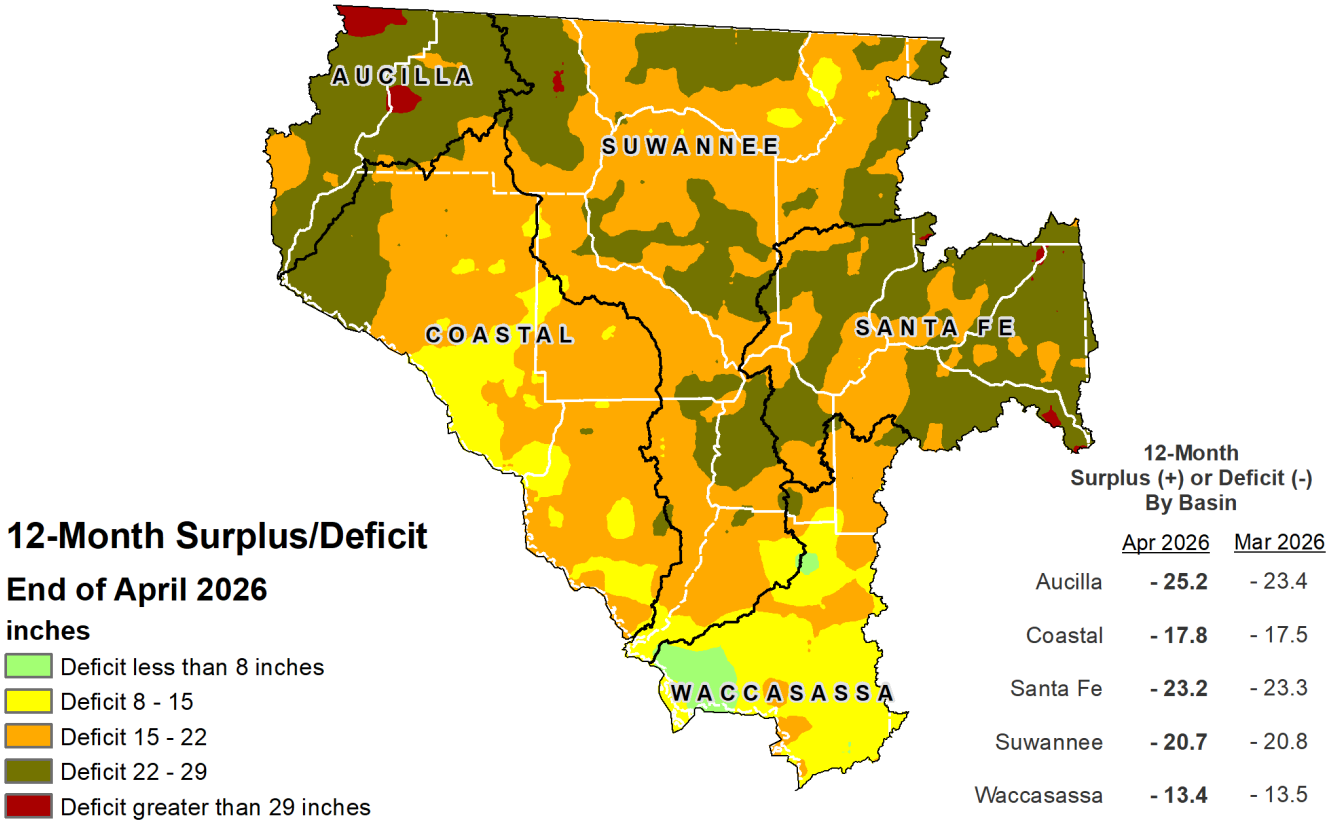


Figure 4: 3 - Month Rainfall Surplus/Deficit by River Basin through April 30, 2026

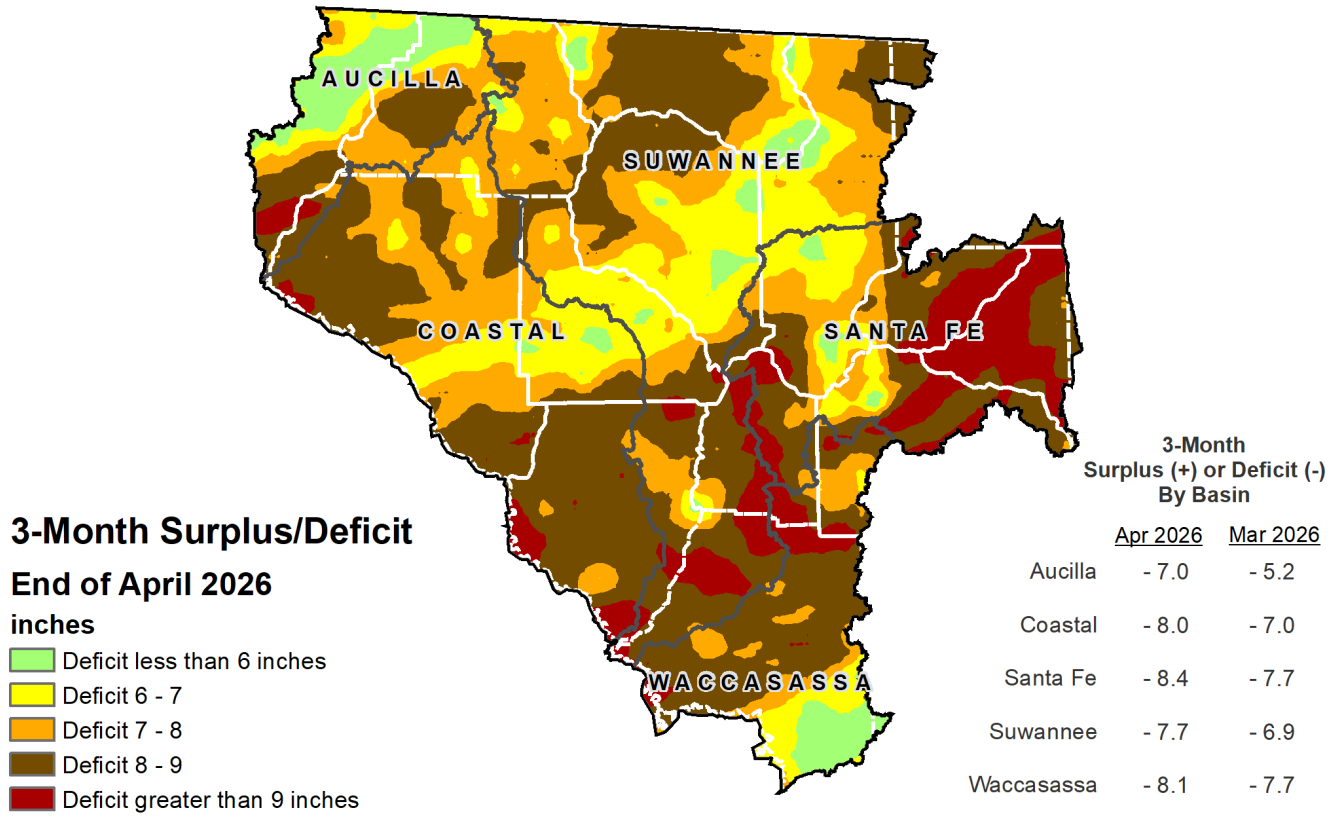
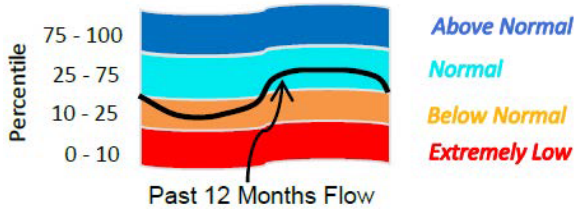
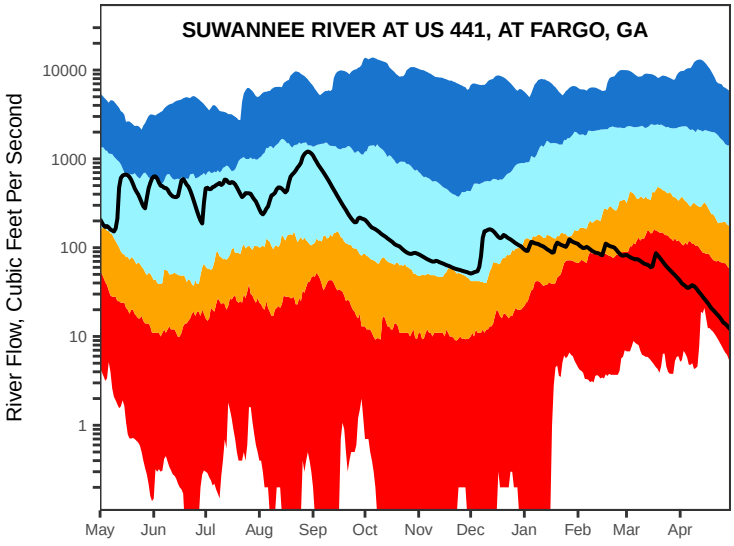
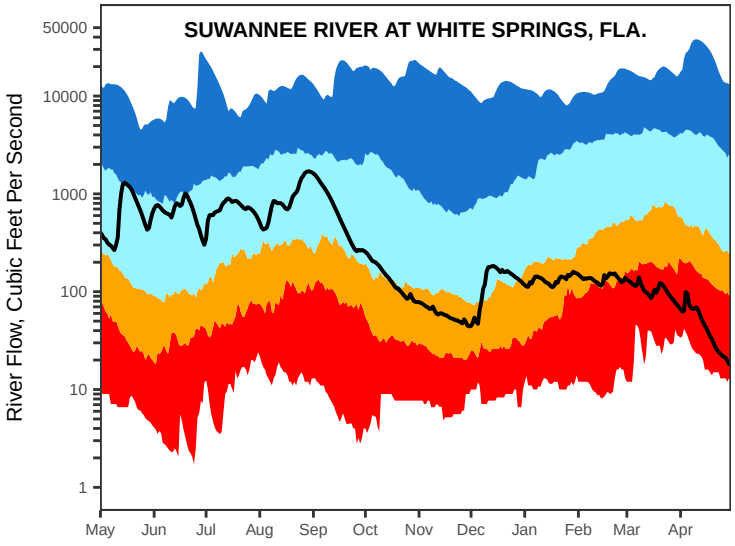


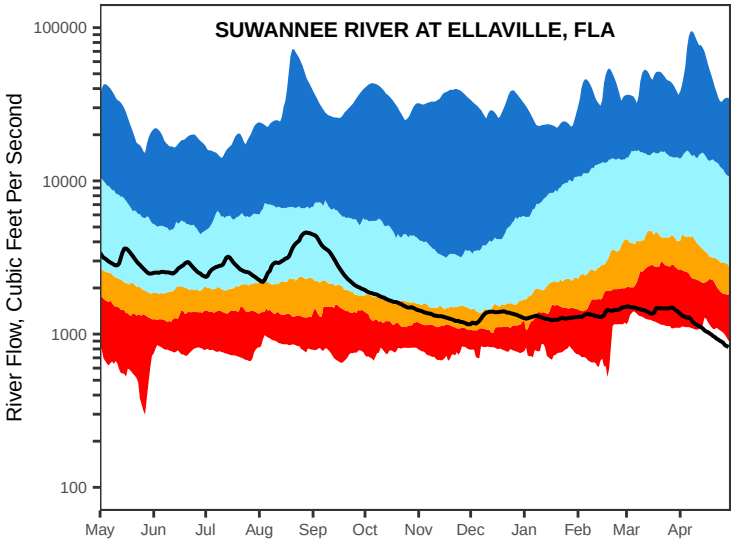
Figure 5: Daily River Flow Statistics

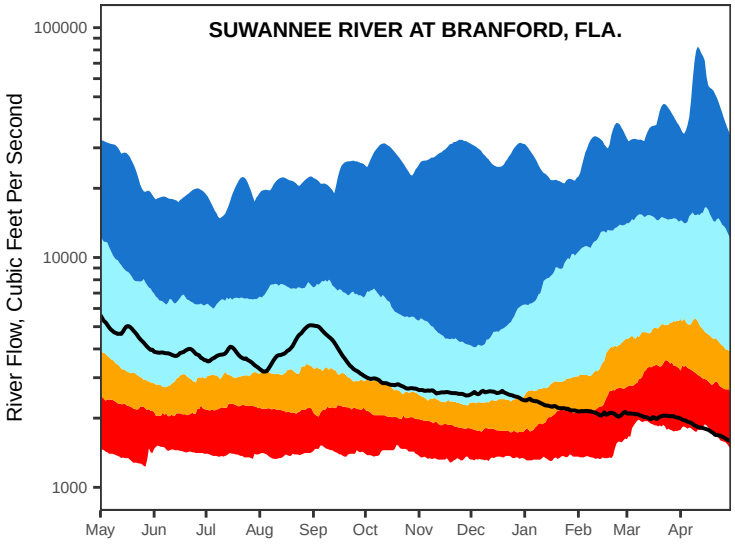
May 1, 2025 through April 30, 2026

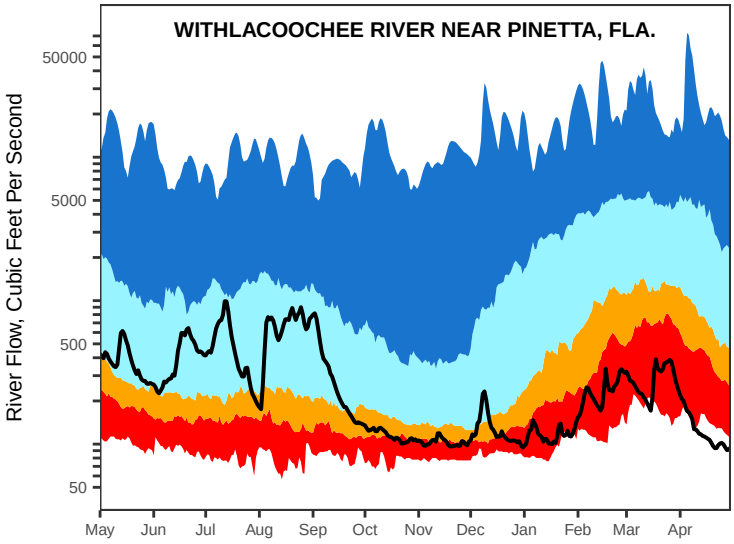












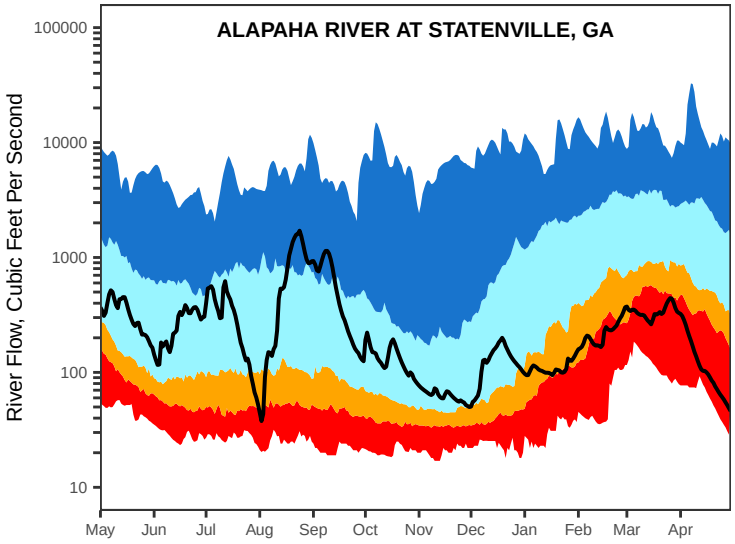
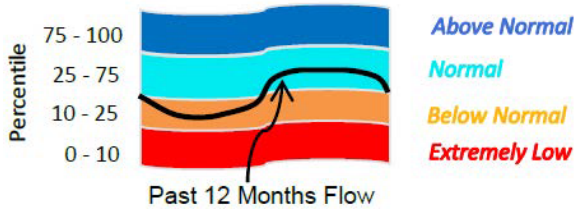
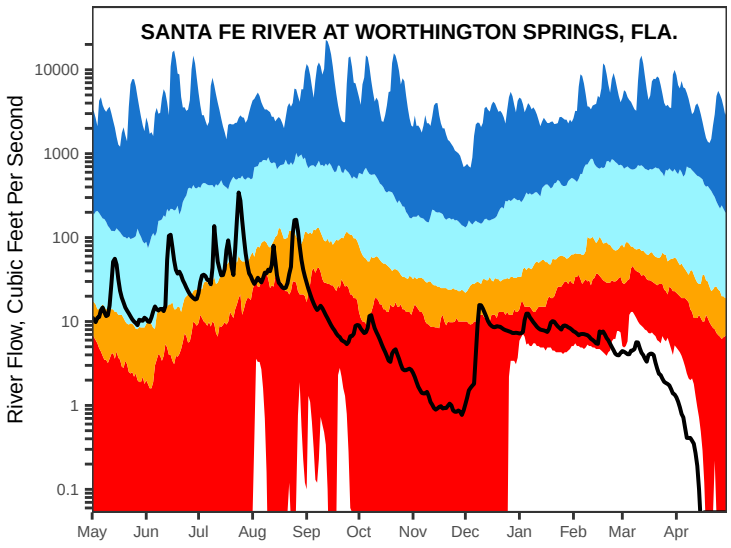
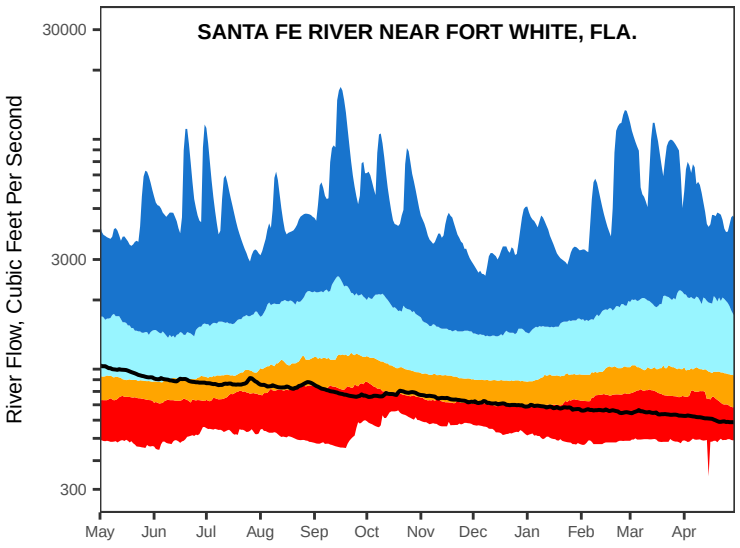


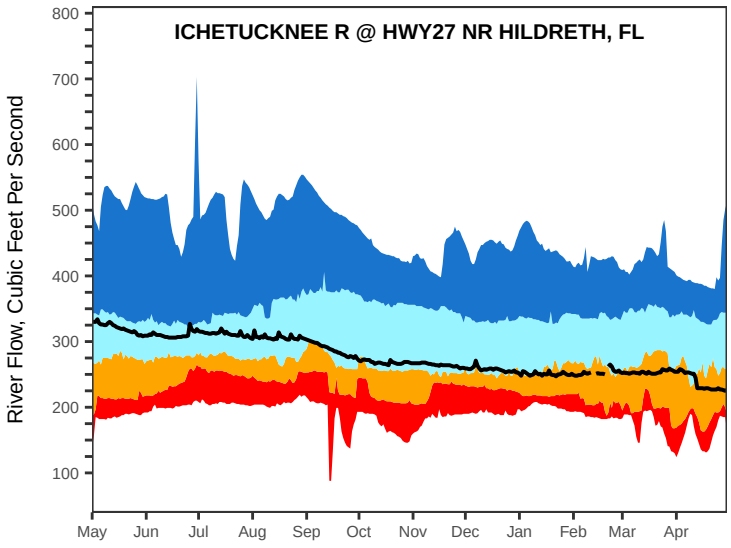
Figure 5, cont.: Daily River Flow Statistics

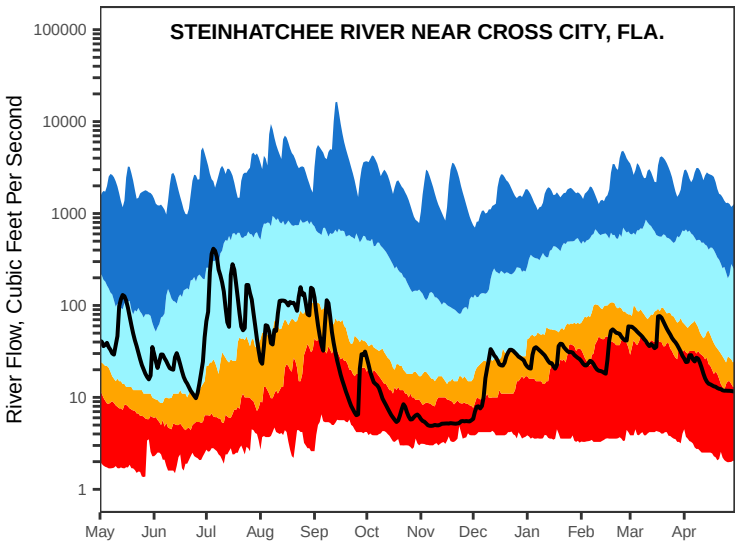
May 1, 2025 through April 30, 2026

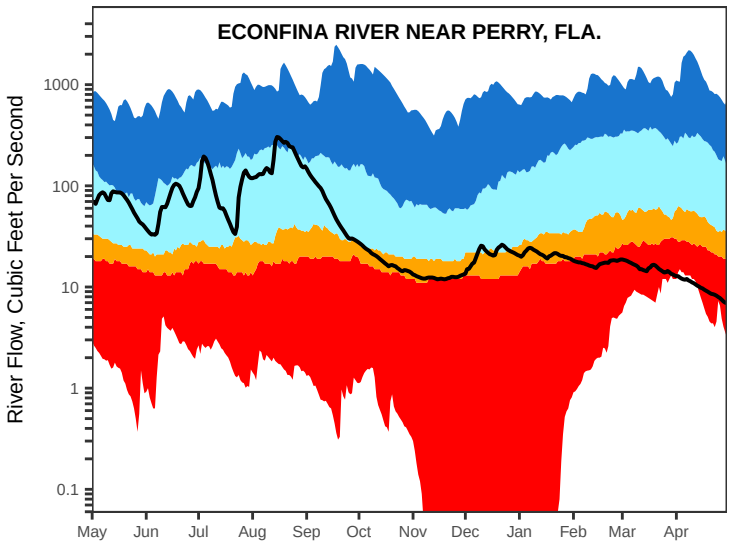


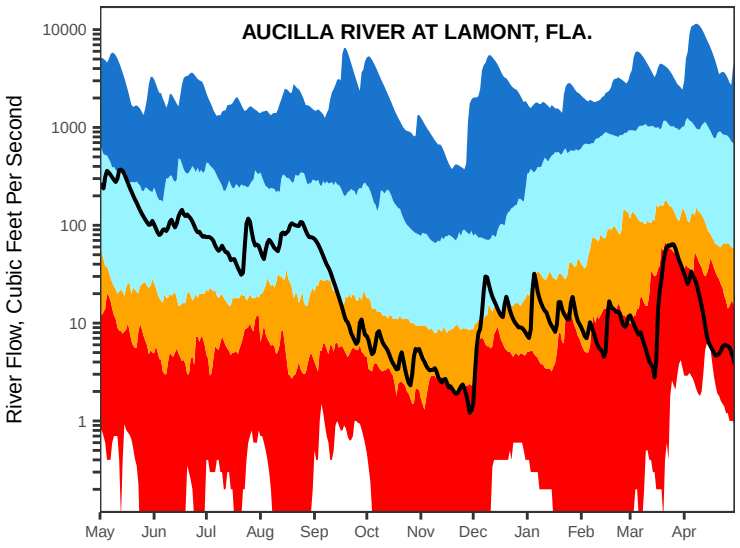












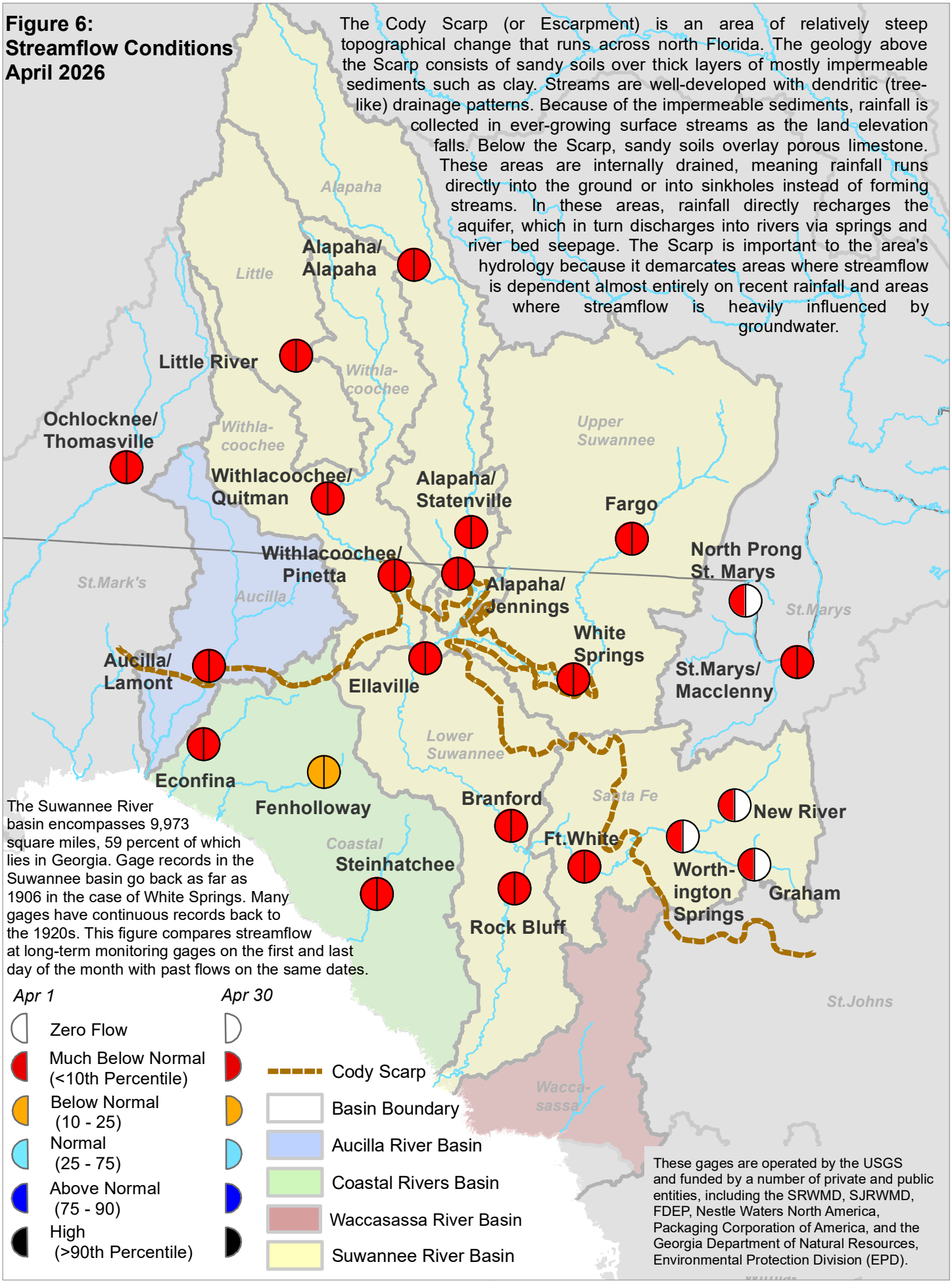
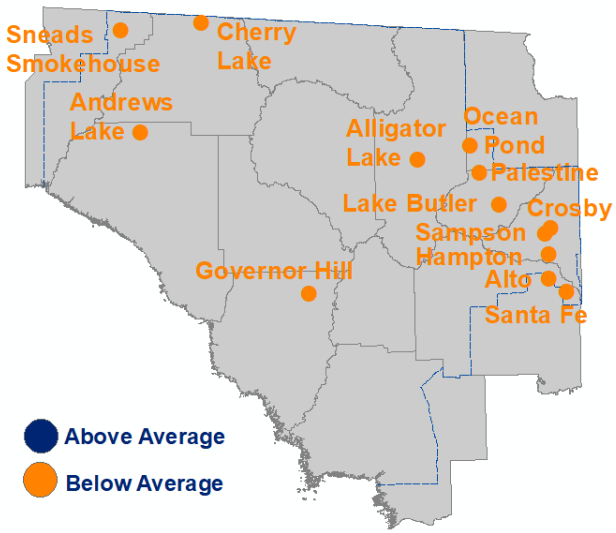


Figure 6:
Streamflow Conditions
April 2026
The Cody Scarp (or Escarpment) is an area of relatively steep topographical change that runs across north Florida. The geology above the Scarp consists of sandy soils over thick layers of mostly impermeable sediments such as clay. Streams are well-developed with dendritic (tree-like) drainage patterns. Because of the impermeable sediments, rainfall is collected in ever-growing surface streams as the land elevation falls. Below the Scarp, sandy soils overlay porous limestone. These areas are internally drained, meaning rainfall runs directly into the ground or into sinkholes instead of forming streams. In these areas, rainfall directly recharges the aquifer, which in turn discharges into rivers via springs and river bed seepage. The Scarp is important to the area's hydrology because it demarcates areas where streamflow is dependent almost entirely on recent rainfall and areas where streamflow is heavily influenced by groundwater.
Alapaha
Alapaha/
Alapaha
Little
Little River
Withla-
coochee
Ochlocknee/
Thomasville
Withla-
coochee
Upper
Suwannee
Withlacoochee/
Quitman
Alapaha/
Statenville
Fargo
Withlacoochee/
Pinetta
North Prong
St. Marys
St.Mark's
Aucilla
Alapaha/
Jennings
St.Marys
White
Springs
Aucilla/
Lamont
Ellaville
St.Marys/
Macclenny
Lower
Suwannee
Econfina
Fenholloway
Branford
Santa Fe
New River
Ft.White
Coastal
Steinhatchee
Worth-
ington
Springs
Graham
Rock Bluff
St.Johns
Wacca-
sassa
The Suwannee River basin encompasses 9,973 square miles, 59 percent of which lies in Georgia. Gage records in the Suwannee basin go back as far as 1906 in the case of White Springs. Many gages have continuous records back to the 1920s. This figure compares streamflow at long-term monitoring gages on the first and last day of the month with past flows on the same dates.
Apr 1
Apr 30
Zero Flow
Much Below Normal (<10th Percentile)
Below Normal (10 - 25)
Normal (25 - 75)
Above Normal (75 - 90)
High (>90th Percentile)
Cody Scarp
Basin Boundary
Aucilla River Basin
Coastal Rivers Basin
Waccasassa River Basin
Suwannee River Basin
These gages are operated by the USGS and funded by a number of private and public entities, including the SRWMD, SJRWMD, FDEP, Nestle Waters North America, Packaging Corporation of America, and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division (EPD).

Figure 7: April 2026 Lake Levels



SRWMD lakes react differently to climatic changes depending on their location in the landscape. Some lakes, in particular in the eastern part of the District, are embedded in a surficial or intermediate aquifer over relatively impermeable clay deposits. These lakes rise and fall according to local rainfall and surface runoff. They retain water during severe droughts since most losses occur from evaporation. Other lakes, such as Governor Hill, have porous or "leaky" bottoms that interact with the Floridan aquifer. These lakes depend on groundwater levels to stay high. If aquifer levels are low, these lakes go dry even if rainfall is normal.

The District currently monitors 13 lakes on a long-term basis; much of the data was originally provided by volunteer observers. Monitoring records began in the 1970s, except for Lakes Butler, Sampson, and Santa Fe, which started in 1957.

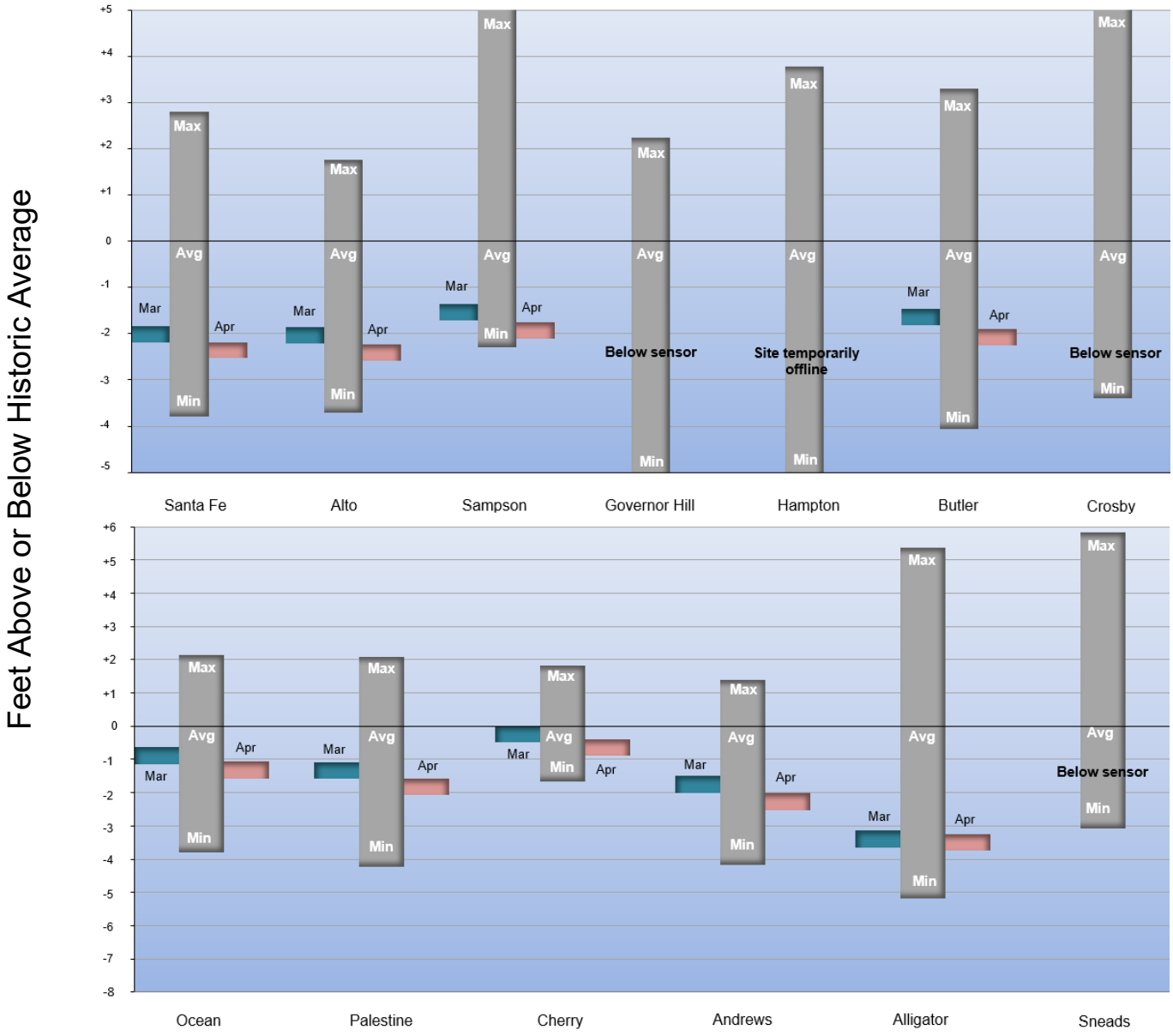


Figure 8: Flow Over the Past 12 Months, Manatee Springs (cubic feet per second)

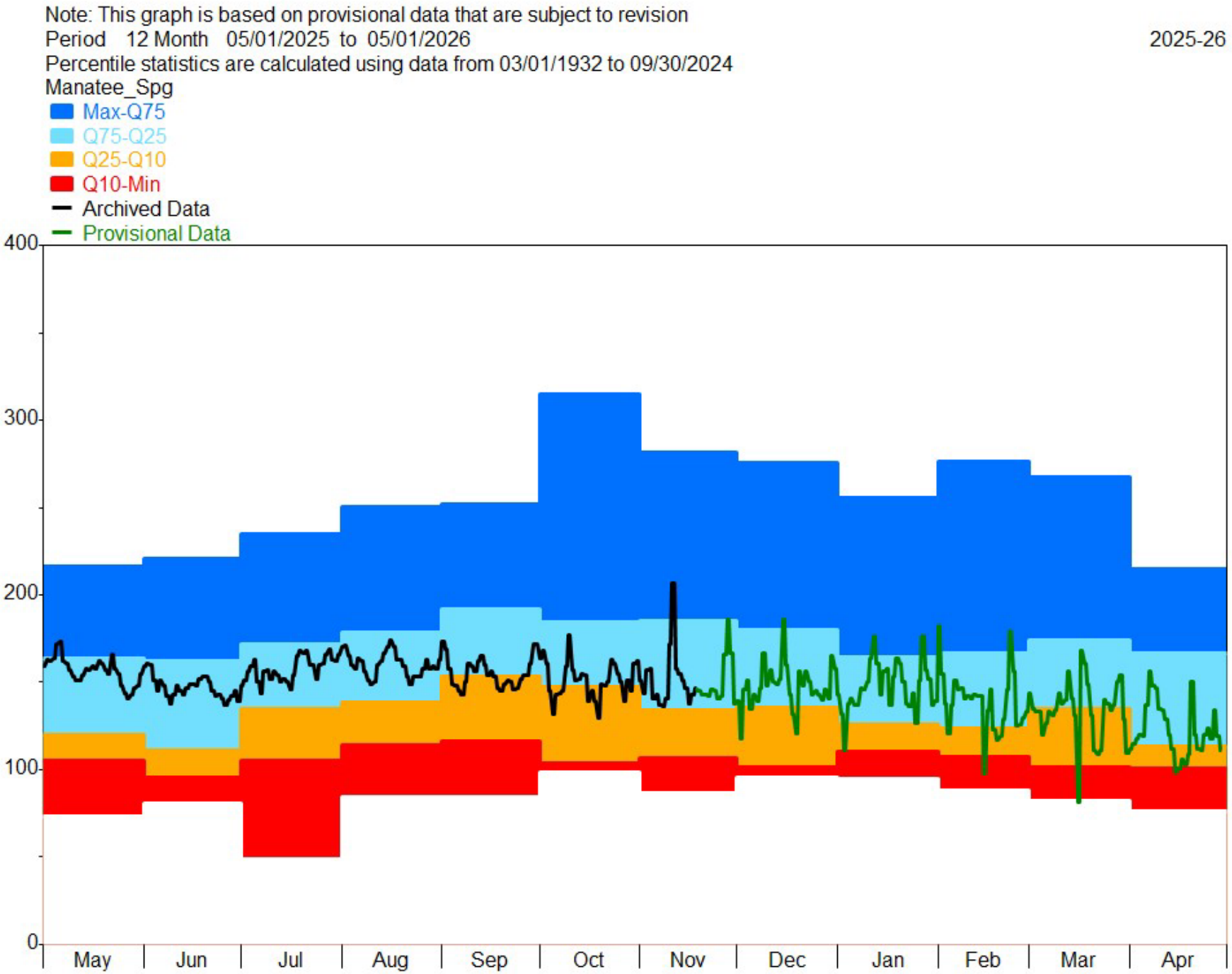
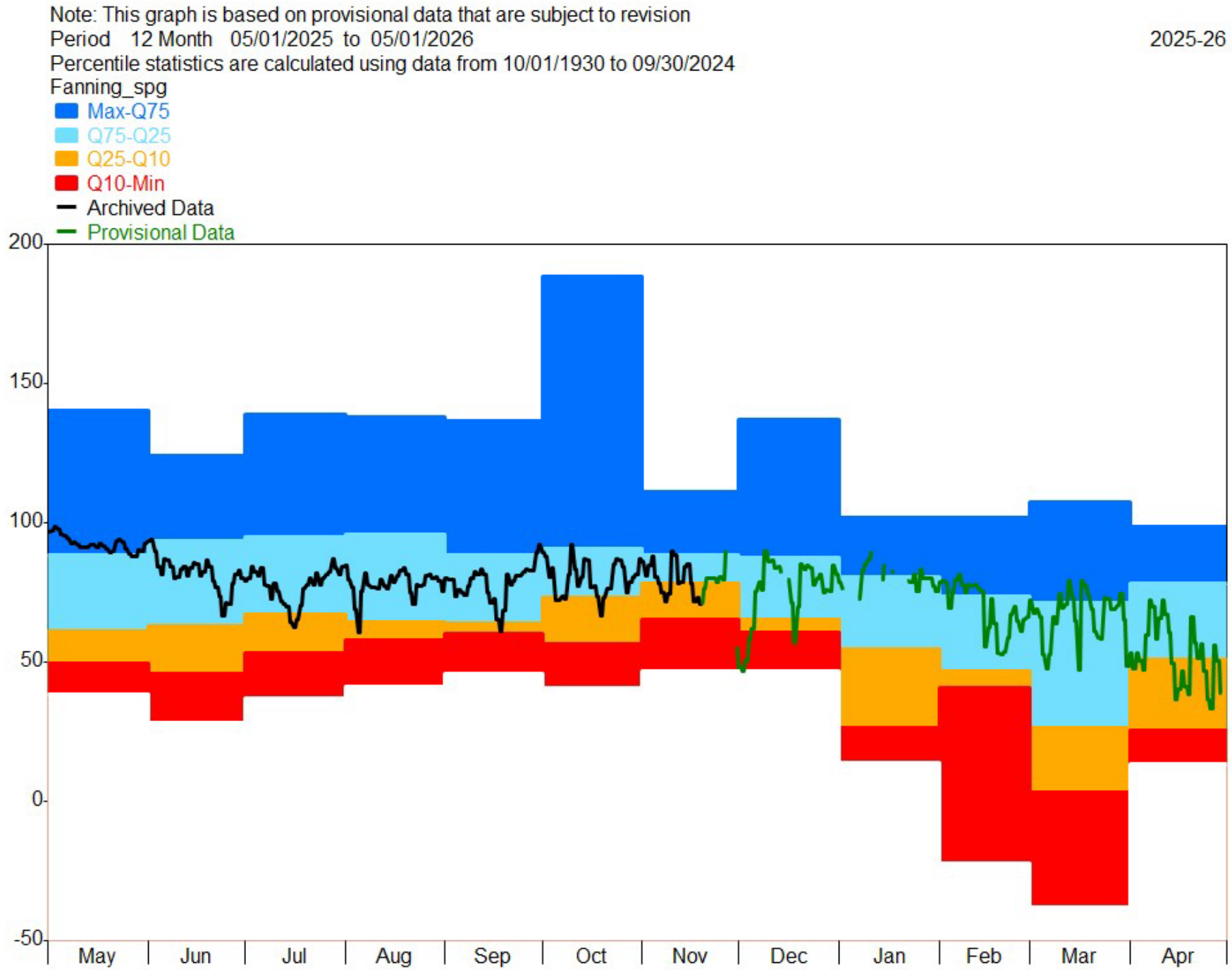


Figure 9: Flow Over the Past 12 Months, Fanning Springs (cubic feet per second)



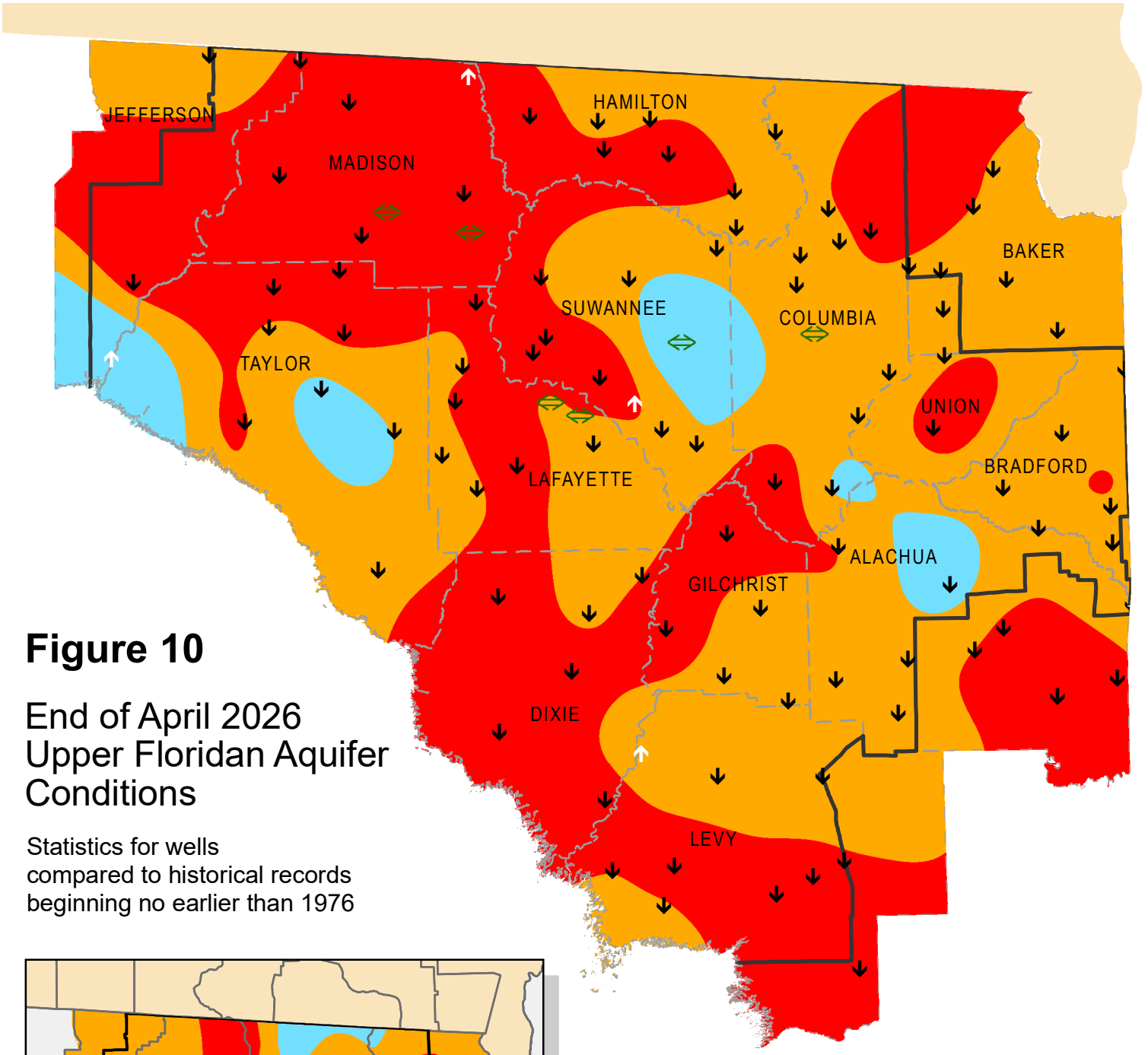
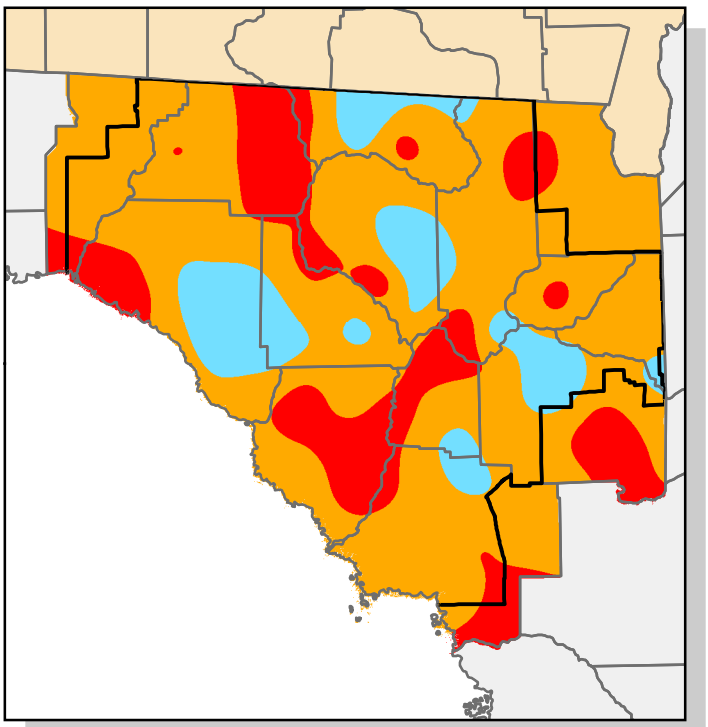


Figure 10

End of April 2026 Upper Floridan Aquifer Conditions

Statistics for wells compared to historical records beginning no earlier than 1976



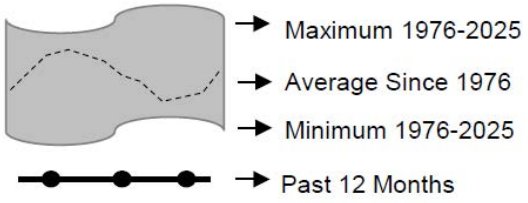
Inset: March Groundwater Percentiles

Additional wells courtesy of SJRWMD, SWFWMD and USGS

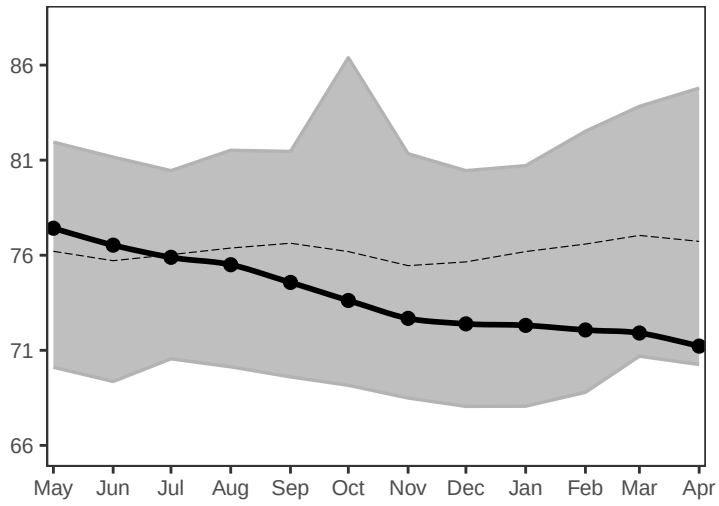
- Extremely High (Greater than 90th Percentile)
- High (75th to 90th Percentile)
- Normal (25th to 75th Percentile)
- Low (10th to 25th Percentile)
- Extremely Low (Less than 10th Percentile)
- Increase/decrease in level since last month
- Increase/decrease since last month less than one percent of historic range
- District Boundary

Figure 11: Monthly Groundwater Statistics

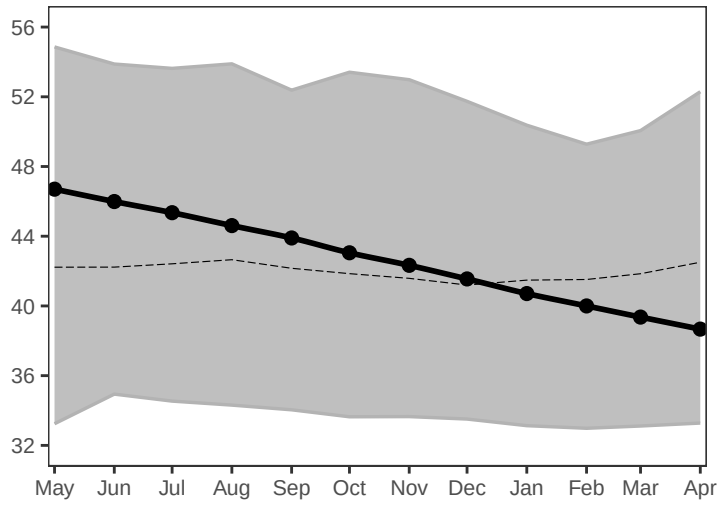
Levels May 2025 through April 2026
Period of Record Beginning 1976



Madison County N010732003
at Greenville

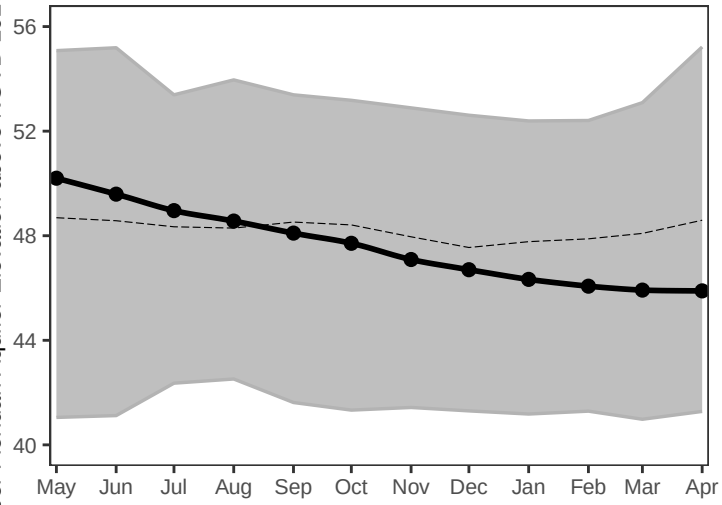


Suwannee County S021335001
near Live Oak

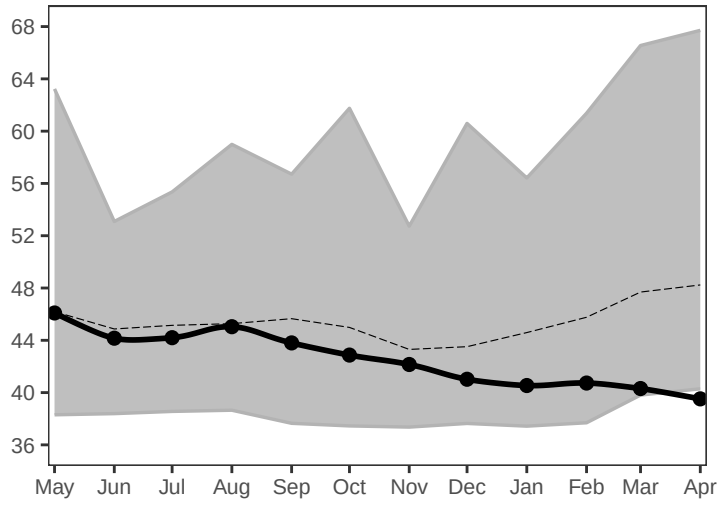


Upper Floridan Aquifer Elevation above NGVD 1929, Feet

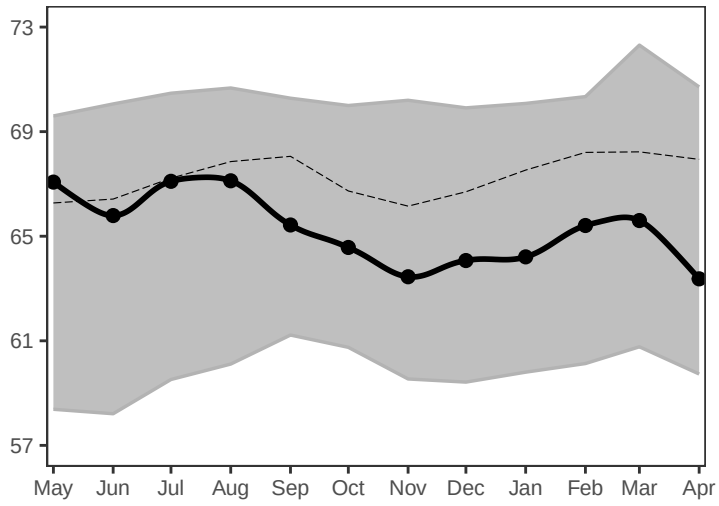
Columbia County S041705001
Lake City



Hamilton County N011422007
near Jasper



Lafayette County S061114001
near Mayo



Taylor County S040736005
Perry

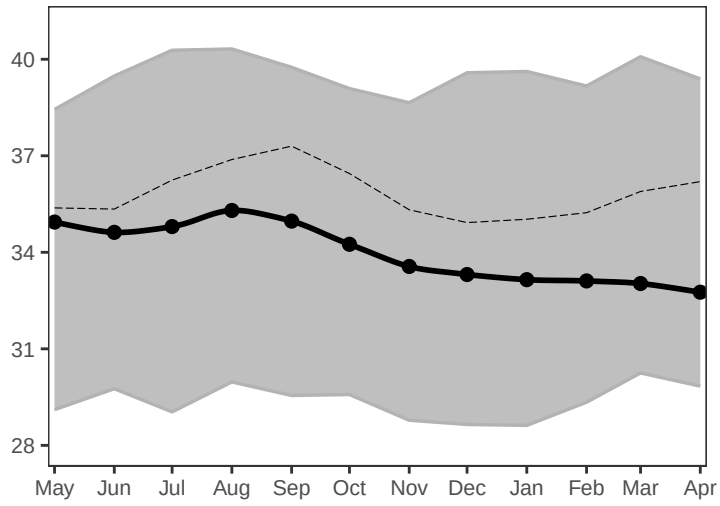
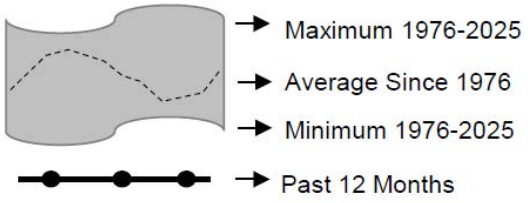
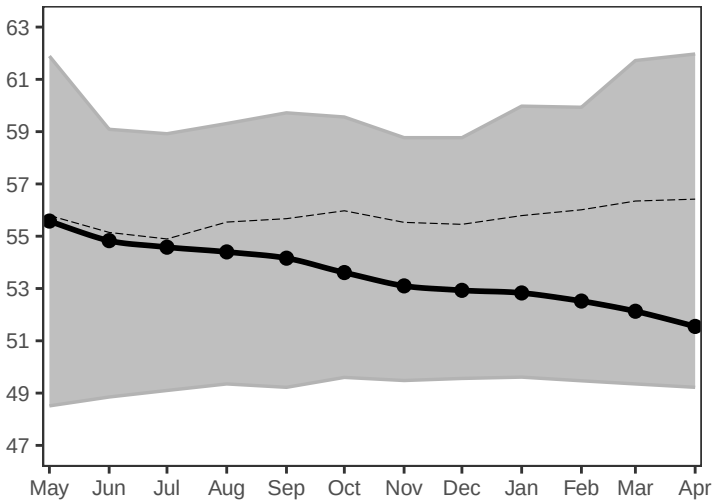


Figure 11, cont.: Monthly Groundwater Statistics

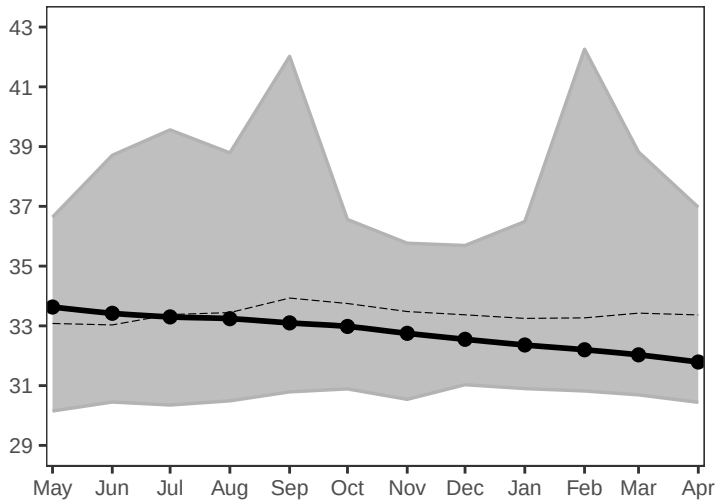
Levels May 2025 through April 2026
Period of Record Beginning 1976



Union County S051933001
near Lake Butler

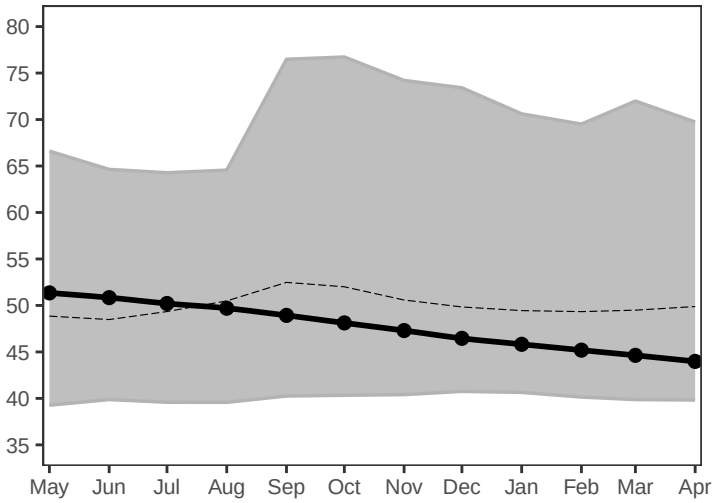


Alachua County S081703001
at High Springs

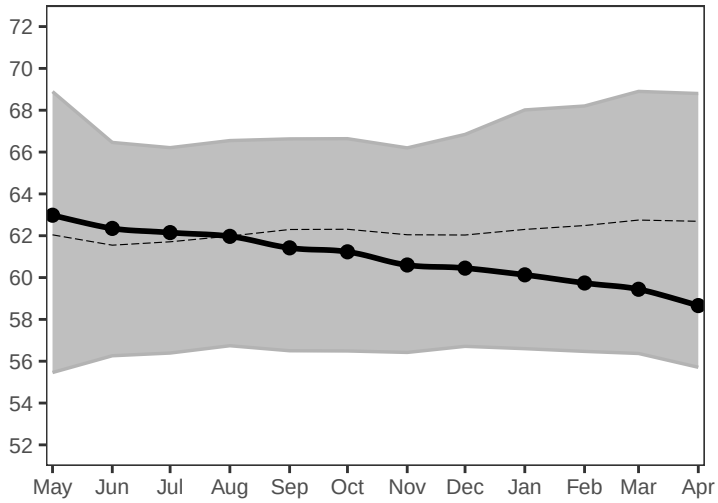


Upper Floridan Aquifer Elevation above NGVD 1929, Feet

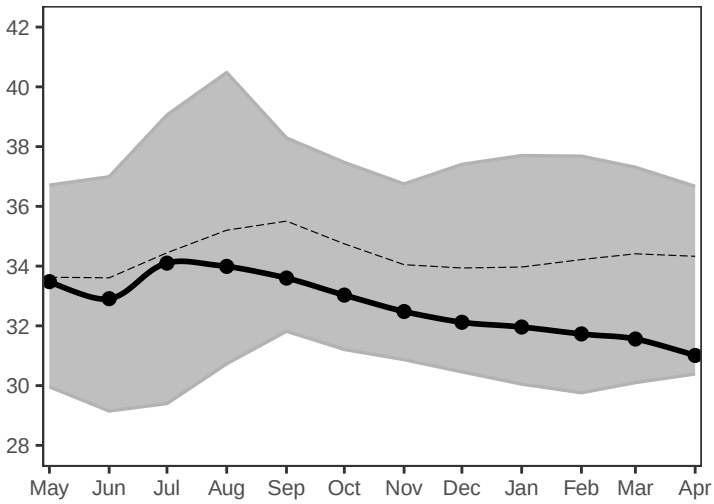
Gilchrist County S091607001
near Trenton



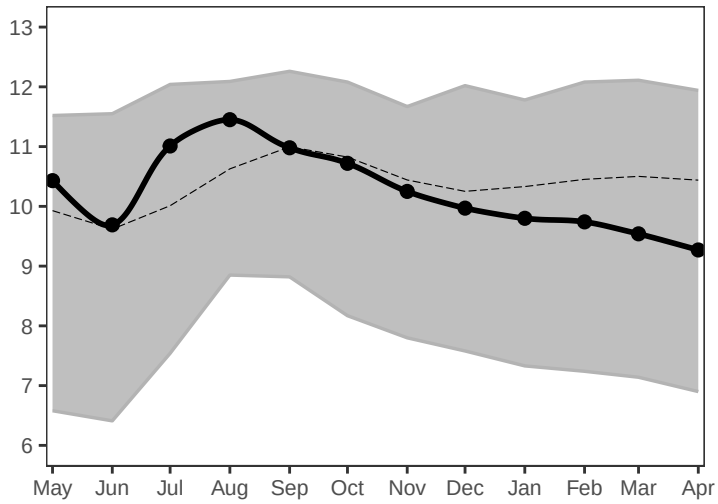
Bradford County S072132001
near Graham



Dixie County S101210001
at Cross City



Levy County S141429001
near Cedar Key



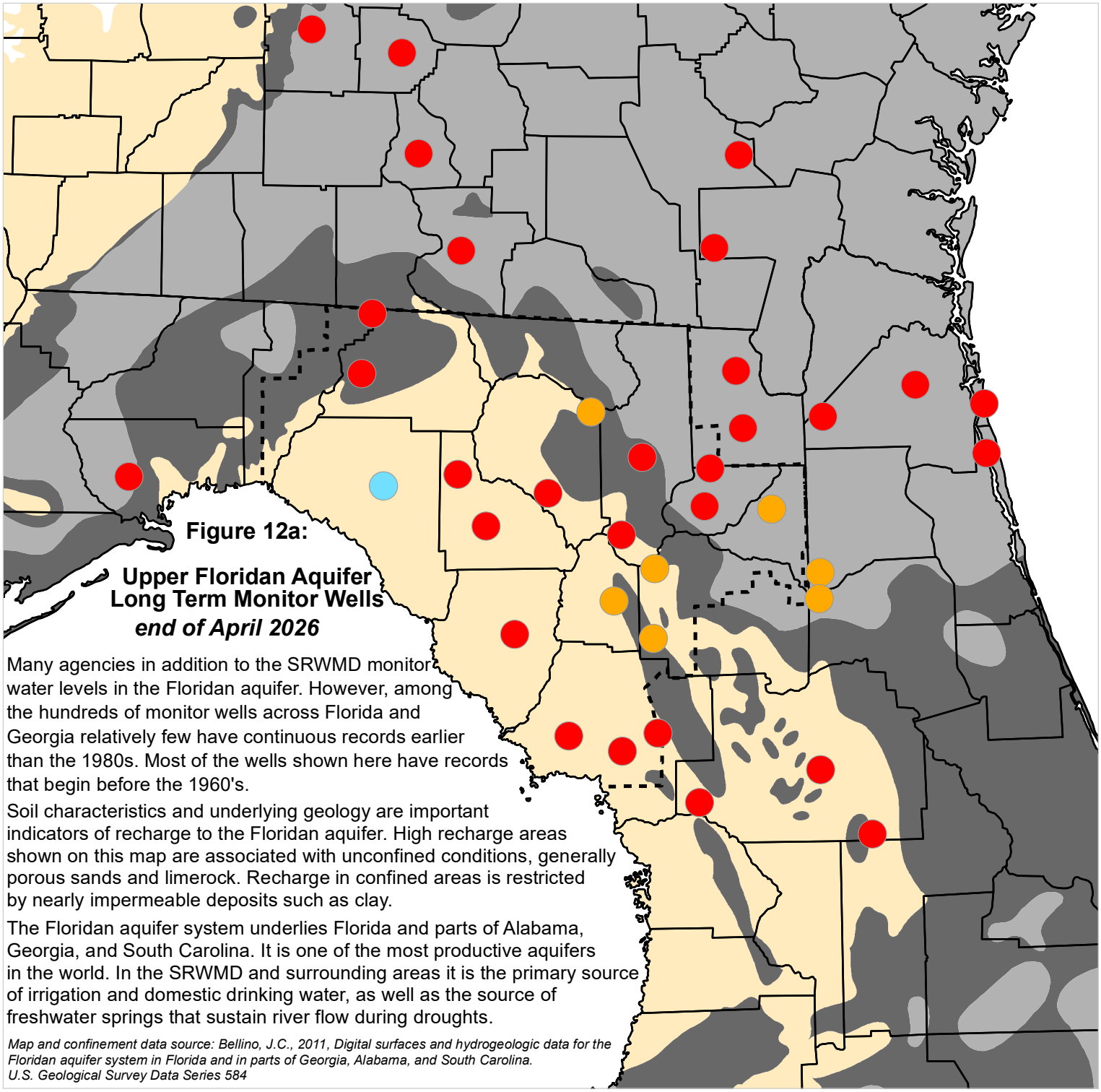


Figure 12a:

Upper Floridan Aquifer Long Term Monitor Wells

end of April 2026

Many agencies in addition to the SRWMD monitor water levels in the Floridan aquifer. However, among the hundreds of monitor wells across Florida and Georgia relatively few have continuous records earlier than the 1980s. Most of the wells shown here have records that begin before the 1960's.

Soil characteristics and underlying geology are important indicators of recharge to the Floridan aquifer. High recharge areas shown on this map are associated with unconfined conditions, generally porous sands and limerock. Recharge in confined areas is restricted by nearly impermeable deposits such as clay.

The Floridan aquifer system underlies Florida and parts of Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina. It is one of the most productive aquifers in the world. In the SRWMD and surrounding areas it is the primary source of irrigation and domestic drinking water, as well as the source of freshwater springs that sustain river flow during droughts.

Map and confinement data source: Bellino, J.C., 2011, Digital surfaces and hydrogeologic data for the Floridan aquifer system in Florida and in parts of Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina. U.S. Geological Survey Data Series 584

Occurrence of Confined and Unconfined Conditions in the Upper Floridan Aquifer

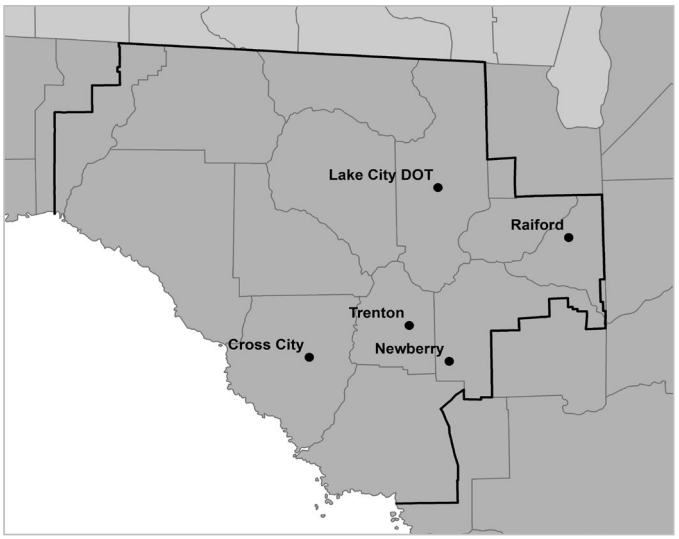
- Confined: Upper confining unit is generally greater than 100 feet thick and unbreached. Recharge is low.
- Semi-confined: Upper confining unit is generally less than 100 feet thick, breached, or both. Recharge is moderate.
- Unconfined: Upper confining unit is absent or very thin. Recharge is high.
- SRWMD Boundary

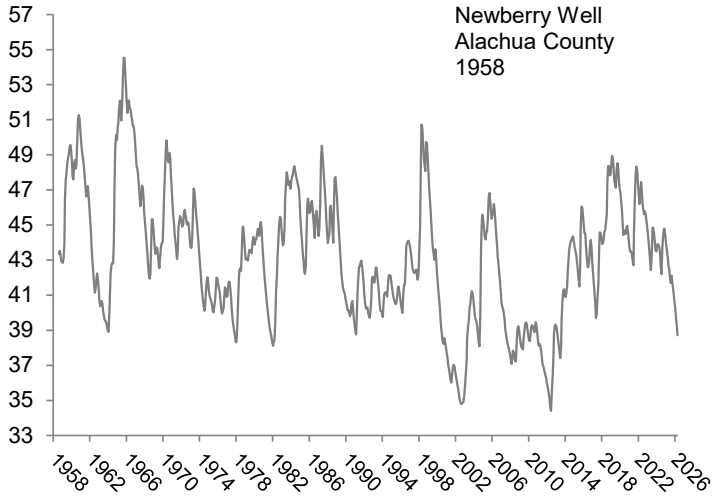
Percentile of Most Recent Water Level Relative to Entire Record

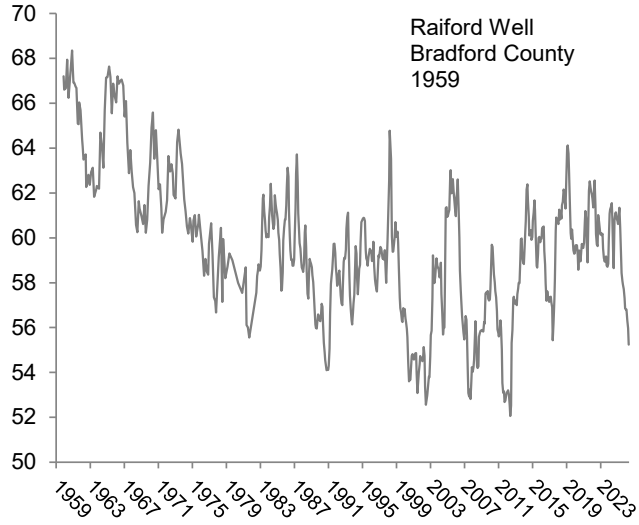
- Very High (Greater than 90th Percentile)
- High (75th to 90th Percentile)
- Normal (25th to 75th Percentile)
- Low (10th to 25th Percentile)
- Very Low (Less than 10th Percentile)
- Data Not Available

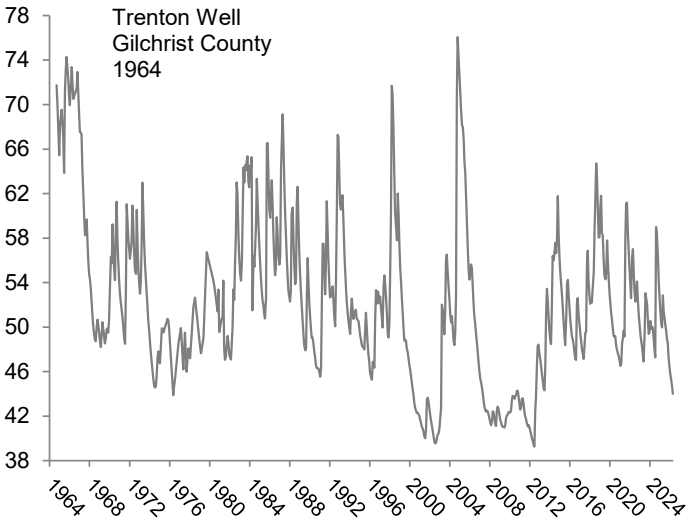
Figure 12b: Regional Long Term Upper Floridan Aquifer Levels

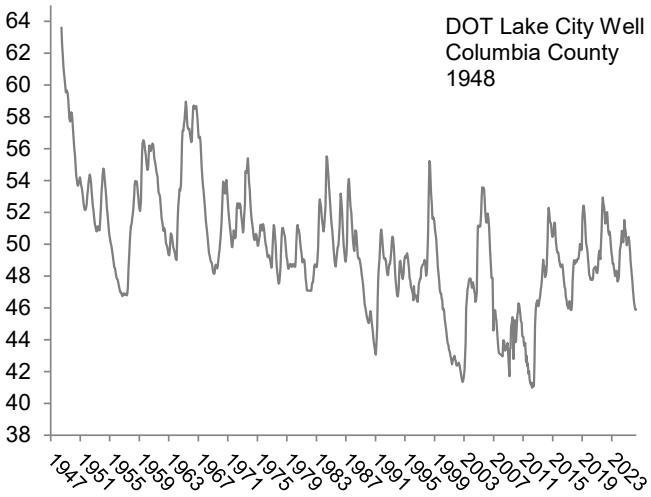
Data through April 2026

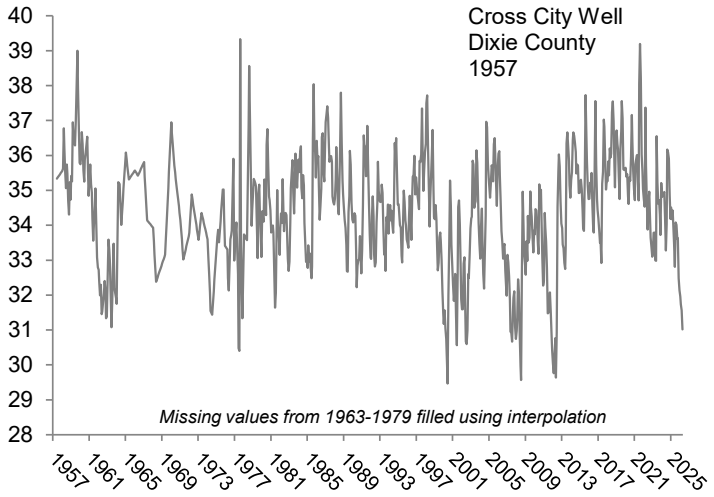












Upper Floridan Aquifer Elevation above NGVD 1929, Feet