

## **Facts about the Apalachicola River and Bay**

- Apalachicola Bay is one of the most productive estuaries in the northern hemisphere and is of major economic and ecological importance to the eastern Gulf of Mexico.
- Apalachicola Bay produces about **10 percent of the U.S. oyster supply**, and accounts for **90 percent of Florida's harvest**. Seafood including shrimp, crab, fish, and oysters is the driving force of the economy of Franklin County, Florida.
- The Apalachicola River is the **largest river in Florida by water volume/flow**. The Apalachicola River is 106 miles long, extending from the confluence of Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers at the Alabama, Florida, Georgia state line to Apalachicola Bay on the northern Gulf of Mexico.
- The productivity of the **Apalachicola Bay is dependent on the Apalachicola River to carry fresh water and essential nutrients downstream to feed the bay's abundant estuarine organisms**.
- The Apalachicola River provides **35% of the freshwater flow and nutrients to the eastern Gulf of Mexico and as such supports fisheries valued at over \$5.8 billion to west Florida**.
- The Apalachicola River basin stands out as one of the North America's *last* ecosystems that retain much of its incredible biological diversity, including:
  - **1300 species of plants** overall with 127 of these plant species the very rarest in North America; 103 of which are at risk
  - The **highest biological density and diversity of amphibians and reptiles in North America, north of Mexico**
  - More than **50 species of mammals**, including the Florida black bear, the endangered West Indian Manatee and both the Indiana bat, and the gray bat are found in the Apalachicola drainage basin.
  - The Apalachicola River watershed is one of the most important bird habitats in the Florida.
  - More than **40 species of amphibians** and **80 species of reptiles** live within the Apalachicola River basin. **131 species of fresh and estuarine fish** live in the Apalachicola River, more than any other river in Florida.
  - Apalachicola River basin is a **critical spawning and nursery ground** for important commercial and sports fish species. The Apalachicola Bay is a major nursery for penaeid

shrimp, blue crabs, and many fish species including striped bass, sturgeon, grouper, snapper, red fish, speckled trout, and flounder.

- More than **360 marine mollusks** are found in the watershed, three of these are endangered.
- Endangered or potentially endangered fish species such as the **sturgeon, blue stripped shiner, shoal bass and Suwannee bass** are found in the Apalachicola River basin.
- The Apalachicola River basin is home to the Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve (ANERR) - the second largest of the 25 Research Reserves within the National Reserve System. The major objectives of the Reserve are research and education.

### **For more information, contact:**

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