mullskos. The Flint was the historic home to 29 mussel species; today only 22 species remain, including the federally protected Fat Threeridge, Purple Bankclimber, Shiny-rayed Pocketbook, Gulf Moccasinshell, Oval Pigtoe and Southern Creekmussel. Sedentary filter feeders, mussels are considered a “canary in the coal mine” for our rivers as they are the first species to feel the effects of pollution. The southeast is the center of global mussel diversity. Historically 300 species could be found here. Unfortunately, seven percent of those mussels are now considered extinct and another 40 percent are considered endangered or threatened. That’s bad news for the mussels and bad news for us because mussels keep our rivers clean by filtering nutrients from the water.

**Mile 0.6—Flint River Retreat**—This campground operated by a local farmer features nearly a mile of riverfront and offers cabins, RV hook ups, tent sites and canoe and kayak rentals. Shuttles are run on river using their uniquely outfitted pontoon boat.

**Points of Interest**

- **Covey Rise Plantation & Bobwhite Quail**
- **Covey Rise Plantation & Bobwhite Quail**

**Mile 1—Flint River Water Supply Experiment**—Due west of this location, in the Ellmold Wildlife Management Area, the state is conducting an experiment that it hopes will solve low-flow issues on the Flint and its tributaries and remedy metro Atlanta’s growing demand for water. The project involves drilling wells and pumping water from the Floridan aquifer (the aquifer that feeds the Flint and its tributaries) into deeper aquifers thousands of feet underground to “store” the water so that during periods of drought that same water can be pumped back into the Flint. The project, as originally envisioned, would produce water to meet minimum flow requirements at the Florida state line where the Flint and Chattahoochee meet to form the Apalachicola. This, in turn, would allow metro Atlanta to pump more water from the Chattahoochee River. The cost of the project: $900 million to $1.2 billion to be paid for by taxpayers and/or metro Atlanta water customers. Aquifer storage and recovery, as the process is called, has never been successfully executed in Georgia. In fact, in parts of Georgia its use is prohibited because of concerns over contamination of pristine groundwater. If this multi-million-dollar scheme sounds like a boondoggle, just follow the money. Its original proponents were a politically-connected consulting firm headed by former Department of Natural Resources Commissioner Joe Tanner. The firm, using the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission as a conduit, applied for and received a $4.6 grant from Gov. Nathan Deal’s Water Supply Program to conduct this experiment, despite the fact that the state agency evaluating potential water supply projects gave it “zero” on a scale of 100 when scoring the project for “need.” Joe Tanner & Associates was a major contributor to Gov. Deal’s gubernatorial campaign. Earlier this year, the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission, dropped the project; Joe Tanner & Associates followed. The state has now taken over the experiment. The Georgia Water Coalition named this experiment to its 2012 Dirty Dozen, a list of the most egregious affronts to Georgia’s water resources.

**Mile 3—Sister Islands & Hernando De Soto**—Though it is difficult to trace the Spanish conquistador’s exact route through Georgia, historians believe that he crossed the Flint River twice—the first time going from east to west near this set of islands in March 1540. Using felled timbers near the river, De Soto’s men crafted a boat and using ropes tied to bow and stern ferried the army of several hundred men across the river. The marauding explorers wreaked havoc and death on the native people as they wandered for three years across the southeast. De Soto died near the Mississippi River two years after crossing the Flint. In 1853, when his army stumbled into a Spanish settlement in present day Mexico, only half of the original 700 in the expedition remained.

**Mile 6.4—Ichawaynochoway Creek & Rights of Passage—**On river left here is this 29,000-acre outdoor laboratory that was once the quail hunting reserve of Robert W. Woodruff, long-time chairman of the Coca-Cola Co. An avid outdoorsman, Woodruff managed the land to maintain longleaf pine and wiregrass habitat—a habitat that once covered much of the southeast. After Woodruff’s death in 1985, the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation established the center and continues to fund its various research and education projects. It is named for the senior vice-president of Coca-Cola and long-time associate of Woodruff.

**Mile 10—Steamboat/Cotton Boat Ruins**—On river left, at low water levels, the remains of a river vessel more than 100-year-old can be seen. In the 1800s, there were dozens of steamboat landings on the Flint - from its mouth at the Chattahoochee to Albany. Cotton from nearby farms was brought to these landings and shipped down river destined for the Port of Apalachicola on the Gulf of Mexico. During that time, Apalachicola was the third busiest port on the Gulf (behind New Orleans and Mobile). With the advent of railroads that enabled the transport of cotton overland to Atlantic coast ports, the importance of the Flint as a commercial highway diminished. While steamers were the primary means of moving cotton, “cotton boxes” were also employed. These large motor-less barges carried as many as 600 bales of cotton.