Troupville Trot–Paddle Georgia 2019
June 15—withlacoochee River

Distance: 11 miles
Starting Elevation: 102 feet
Ending Elevation: 92 feet

Restroom Facilities:

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<th>Mile 0</th>
<th>Truopville Boat Landing</th>
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Points of Interest:

**Mile 0 Little River**—Surprise! Our journey does not begin on the Withlacoochee! Instead the first 1700 feet of our journey is actually on the Little River, which, ironically, is bigger than the Withlacoochee River. With its headwaters some 100 miles upstream in Turner County, it was described in 1889 by hunter-explorer Montgomery M. Folsom as the Ockolocoochee River or Little River. Folsom noted the disparity between the Little and the Withlacoochee and the seeming unfairness that the larger river gave up its name to the smaller: “It is like the wedding of a great big strapping wiregrass girl with a short, stout, presumptive little man,” he wrote.

**Mile 0.2 Withlacoochee River & Troupville**—Here the diminutive Withlacoochee swallows the Little, if not in volume, at least in name. The confluence of the two rivers was from 1833 to 1860 the site of Troupville, the seat of government for Lowndes County. It was a busy community of about 20 families with courthouse and jail, hotels, four stores, a pair of churches, a tavern and even a bowling alley. At that time, the story goes, the Troupville account by James Nicholas Talley, when court was in session the town became a beehive of activity: “Court Week always attracted a great concourse of people. Some attended from necessity or compulsion, some to enjoy the feast of erudition and eloquence; others to trade, traffic or elector, but to many it was an occasion for much drinking and horse swapping, and for indulgence in cock fighting, horse racing, and other ‘worldly amusements’ for which Troupville became somewhat notorious. Indeed, among the Godly, it was regarded as a wild town—almost as wicked as Hawkinsville. The property is currently owned by former Georgia Trust for Public Land Director Helen Tapp who wants to see the property permanently preserved. Troupville was abandoned and passed into history largely because of the very reason for its founding at this location. As a result—despite the relatively new treatment facility, the city has been plagued by chronic sewage overflows, especially during periods of rain when stormwater infiltrates into sewer lines. When heavy rain beset the area in December 2018, more than 6 million gallons of untreated sewage was released from the city’s sewer system. The sewage overflow problems have drawn the ire of downstream neighbors in Florida who have organized a task force to pressure Valdosta to invest in upgrading its sewer system. Fecal bacteria levels on the river rise during these spill events, making the river unhealthy for swimming; this section of river is listed on Georgia’s “polluted streams” list due to high bacteria levels.

**Mile 4—Spring Branch**—This clear, cold, sandy-bottomed stream entering on river left seems appropriately named. The creek drains portions of Kinderloof Forest, a sprawling residential golf community.

**Mile 7.1—Langdale Company Pit Stop**—On river left here is our pit stop provided with cooperation from The Langdale Company, a major landowner and business leader in South Georgia. The Langdale story begins in the late 1800s when John Wesley Langdale began purchasing land in the area in 1890. In 1932, the company was purchased by the Cleveland Trust Company which became the Langdale Corporation. The company has expanded beyond its roots to encompass some 26 subsidiary companies including auto dealerships, a hotel, commercial banks, and the aforementioned Kinderloof Forest golf and residential development along Spring Branch. The company boasts of having planted more trees than it has harvested. In 2009, they marked the planting of their 100 millionth seedling.

**Mile 11—Atlantic & Gulf Railroad**—A railroad bridge has spanned the river here since 1860. From the late 1850s through 1860, some 1200 slaves working for the Savannah, Albany & Gulf Railroad and the Brunswick & Florida Railroad toiled through the wetlands of south Georgia to complete this 100-mile road from the Georgia coast. In 1870 when the route was finally completed, the express train flew across this bridge daily at about two in the morning on its nearly 14-hour journey from Savannah to Bainbridge.

**Mile 11.2—Spook Bridge**—The abandoned circa-1920 open spandrel concrete bridge here is a picturesque, though heavily graffiti-ed edifice that is steeped in legends. According to a 2017 Valdosta-based movie production company those bridge “mythical” into a feature length horror flick titled Spook Bridge. After U.S. 84 bridge was completed upstream around 1950, this span was abandoned and soon attracted the expected crowd of loiterers and rabble rousers. Fanciful tales of tragedies and subsequent hauntings have persisted since (a murder/suicide, two young lovers whose car plunged into the river killing both, a school bus that went off the bridge taking the lives of children). None of these stories have any basis in fact. But, the location does have a long history as a gathering place thanks to Blue Springs located on the river’s west bank. Two springs once attracted people to this spot. The first flowed into the river along its western bank; the second formed a 30-foot diameter pool beyond the river bank and flowed into and out of forders. The latter, which was years old, was the largest of the two and was widely known. In 1876, the Quinman Reporter noted: “The Blue Spring on the Withlacoochee is fast becoming a popular place of resort for those who are fond of fishing and feeling that he needs of rest from the business of everyday life.” By 1920s, Blue Springs was a full-fledged resort with train depot, hotel and cottages. In 1925, the Atlantic Constitution reported the sale of “Quinman’s famous bathing and summer resort” for more than $25,000. By 1929, however, the Blue Springs Company was fighting with the Georgia Highway Board for the life of its namesake spring. At the time the state was “extending” the bridge on the western side of the river, with fill work disrupting the Blue Springs property. Later when Blue Springs was flooded as part of road construction, the state agreed to let the state proceed. Today, the abandoned bridge road, indeed, cut through two large pools of stagnant water some 400 feet west of the river, and Blue—once flowing at a rate of some 12 million gallons a day—no longer provides a recognizable flow.