

SHOULD THE APALACHICOLA RIVER AND BAY BE SEPARATE PROJECTS?

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The United States Corps of Engineers manages the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint river system (ACF) and the Gulf Intercoastal Waterway as two distinct projects. When first conceived, the ACF project extended from Gorrie Bridge, which runs from the City of Apalachicola to Eastpoint, Florida to the headwaters of the Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers, thereby leaving Apalachicola Bay out of the management boundaries for the ACF project. The Gulf Intercoastal Waterway extended from Texas to St. Marks, Florida and included the Apalachicola Bay. Therefore, freshwater inflow to the Apalachicola estuary is not considered a management objective of the ACF project.

At the time of conception of these projects, there was little consideration or understanding of the importance of the freshwater inflow and estuary ecology. However, in more recent decades, advancements in marine ecology have highlighted the importance of freshwater inflows upon marine ecosystems. This consideration has become a central issue of contention in the current U.S. Supreme Court case regarding the “Tri-State Water Wars”, *Florida v Georgia, No.142*. This presentation traces the historic construction of this boundary between these two projects and its enduring political and environmental impacts. It will examine the trade-offs and obstacles to managing the ACF basin and Apalachicola Estuary as a single system.

PRESENTER BIO: Frank Schmitz is a PhD student in the Department of Geography at Florida State University.