



Florida Rivers Lab

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<http://floridarivers.ifas.ufl.edu/>

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Fish Spawning, Movement, and Habitat Utilization in the Apalachicola River



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Fish Spawning, Movement, and Habitat Utilization Patterns in the Battle Bend Region of the Apalachicola River, Florida



Aerial image of Battle Bend.

Fish Tagging

Beginning in March 2006, in cooperation with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, we implanted 80 radio and acoustic telemetry tags in four species of fish: spotted suckers, spotted bass, largemouth bass, and redear sunfish (shellcracker). These fish were tagged and released in both the mainstem of the Apalachicola River and River Styx. In 2007, we began tagging 120 fish with acoustic telemetry tags in the mainstem of the Apalachicola River and in Battle Bend (Navigational Mile 28.8), which has been reconnected to the mainstem by removing over 64,000 cubic yards of sediment and debris. We will evaluate fish use of restored floodplain habitat (Battle Bend) to the use of an undisturbed floodplain habitat (River Styx) as an important spawning environment.

Fish Tracking

Fish movement is determined by a combination of manual tracking from a boat and by an array of receivers that detect and record tags in fish when fish are near the receivers. We will be relocating these tagged fish throughout the year and the information collected will be used to evaluate movement patterns between the mainstem Apalachicola River and associated floodplain and tributary systems related to spawning season and riverine flow levels.



Internal acoustic tags (black) and external tags (yellow).



Receiver system that records nearby tags.

Spawn Timing

We are using light traps to collect newly hatched larval fish and calculate spawn timing of species in the mainstem of the Apalachicola River and its tributaries. This data, combined with the movement data, will allow us to examine how different species use the floodplain environment and how this utilization is affected by flow levels.



Light traps used to collect larval fish.

In addition to the implanted acoustic tags, all fish receive a yellow, string-like, external tag. This external tag has a tag number, our telephone number, and a message to please release the fish. If you catch any tagged fish please call us with the tag number at (352) 392-9617 ext. 285.