SUWANNEE RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board

FROM: Robbie McKinney, Hydrologic Program Manager, Office of Water Resources

THRU: Hugh Thomas, Executive Director

DATE: January 31, 2023

RE: January 2023 Hydrologic Conditions Report

RAINFALL

- Districtwide average rainfall for the month was 2.71", which was about 26% lower than the 1932-2022 average of 3.65" (Table 1, Figure 1). The 12-month period ending January 31 reflected a Districtwide rainfall deficit of 5.74", which represented a decrease in the 6.52" deficit seen at the end of December. Most District counties received between 1" and 4" of rainfall on average with areas of Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton, and Suwannee counties receiving more than 4.5" of rainfall (Figure 2).

- A 12-month rainfall deficit was still present for all river basins, with each decreasing in deficit at the end of January. (Figure 3). However, small portions of the Waccasassa, Coastal, Suwannee, and Aucilla basins showed surpluses greater than 6" by month's end. Areas within most of the basins had rainfall deficits of greater than 14" at the end of the month. All five of the river basins also exhibited 3-month rainfall deficits, which decreased from December to the end of January (Figure 4). In addition, parts of the Waccasassa Basin showed deficits greater than 4.5 inches at month's end.

SURFACE WATER

- **Rivers:** Many of the river stations shown in Figure 5 finished the month in the normal (25^{th} – 75^{th} percentile) flow range. However, the Santa Fe River at Worthington Springs and the Steinhatchee near Cross City gages showed below normal flows (10^{th} – 25^{th} percentile) at the end of January. The Ichetucknee gage experienced technical issues at the beginning of the month but was back online by mid-January. In addition to those listed above, river gages in the Santa Fe Basin (New River and Graham) and St. Mary's Basin ended January with below normal flows (Figure 6). Other river gages in South Georgia ended January in either the above normal (75^{th} – 90^{th} percentile) or high (>90^{th} percentile) flow categories due to increased rainfall in that region.

- **Lakes**: Water increased slightly at most monitored lakes in the District this month (Figure 7). The median decrease in stage across all measured lakes was less than 0.01'. Alligator Lake had the highest stage decrease at almost 1'. Nine lakes concluded the month below their respective long-term averages. As a note, Lake Alto is currently offline and is not included in the report statistics.

- **Springs**: Flow measurements were made during January at 15 springs by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), District staff, and contractors. Madison Blue Springs (Figure 8) began the month in the normal flow category but fell into the below normal range by the end of the month due to increased river levels. Manatee Springs saw flows in either the normal or above normal flow ranges throughout the month of January (Figure 9).

GROUNDWATER

Upper Floridan Aquifer (UFA) levels across the District ranged anywhere from extremely high (>90th percentile) in the eastern portion to an extremely low (<10th percentile) area in Lafayette County at the end of January (Figure 10). Elsewhere, much of the District showed normal groundwater conditions this month. Overall, groundwater levels decreased by a median of about 0.1' since the end of December and ended January with a Districtwide average around the 46th percentile.

Many of the county index wells remained higher than the historical monthly average levels at the end of January except for wells in Madison, Hamilton, Lafayette, Taylor, and Dixie counties (Figure 11). The long-term District UFA well levels ended the month either within the very low, low, normal, or high categories (Figure 12a). Overall, water levels at long-term wells with records that extend back to at least 1964 mostly decreased this month (Figure 12b).

CLIMATE AND DROUGHT OUTLOOK

The Climate Prediction Center forecasts a transition from La Niña into El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) neutral conditions in the next couple of months, with these conditions persisting through spring and early summer.

The NOAA three-month seasonal outlook favors above normal temperatures along with below normal rainfall chances throughout the District from February through April. The U.S. Drought Monitor report released on February 9, 2023, showed all District counties in at least one of the following drought categories: Abnormally Dry (D0), Moderate Drought (D1), or Severe Drought (D2).

CONSERVATION

Water conservation continues to be necessary to sustain healthy groundwater levels and flows in District springs and rivers. All users are urged to eliminate unnecessary uses. Landscape irrigation during Eastern Standard Time (November 6, 2022, to March 12, 2023) is limited to once per week based on a District water conservation rule that applies to residential landscaping, public or commercial recreation areas, and businesses that are not regulated by a District-issued water use permit. Information about the District's year-round conservation measures is available at http://www.srwmd.org/index.aspx?NID=337.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Hydrologic Conditions Report is a monthly combined effort between the Offices of Water Resources and Hydrologic Data Services data collection and review programs. Acknowledgment is made to the following staff for their contributions to the timely production of this report:

- Data Collection: Jamie Gaylord, Matthew Jordan, Dylan Mock, Gene Page, and Vince Robinson
- QA/QC and Reporting: Stephanie Armstrong, Alejandro Garcia, Susie Hetrick, Robbie McKinney, and Brandi Sistrunk
- Administrative Support/Document Preparation/IT: Paul Buchanan, Tyler Jordan, Andrew Neel, April Olive, and Kelly Wooley

This report is compiled in compliance with Chapter 40B-21.211, Florida Administrative Code, using rainfall (gage-adjusted radar-derived estimates), groundwater (121 wells), surface water (35 stations), and general information such as drought indices and forecasts. Data are provisional and updated as revised data become available. Data are available at http://www.mysuwanneeriver.com/507/Water-Data-Portal or upon request.

Table 1: Nexrad Monthly Rainfall Totals by County (inches)

County	January 2023	January Average*	Month % of Normal	Total Last 12 Months	Annual % of Normal
Alachua	1.88	3.16	59%	49.59	94%
Baker	2.10	3.46	61%	47.48	90%
Bradford	1.77	3.24	55%	48.35	93%
Columbia	2.55	3.61	71%	47.97	91%
Dixie	2.54	3.57	71%	50.68	87%
Gilchrist	2.39	3.39	71%	48.91	89%
Hamilton	3.43	3.92	88%	45.99	89%
Jefferson	4.27	4.28	100%	47.27	84%
Lafayette	2.66	3.86	69%	47.23	85%
Levy	1.81	3.26	55%	51.06	91%
Madison	3.68	4.21	87%	50.22	94%
Suwannee	2.88	3.87	74%	46.48	87%
Taylor	2.93	3.97	74%	50.03	88%
Union	2.10	3.41	62%	47.40	90%

*Based on PRISM LT81 rainfall averages by county (1927-2021)

January 2022 District Average	2.71
January Long-Term Average (1932-2022)	3.65
Historical 12-month Average (1932-2022)	54.66
Past 12-Month Total	48.92
12-Month Rainfall **Surplus**/Deficit	**-5.74**

Figure 1: Comparison of District-wide Monthly Rainfall

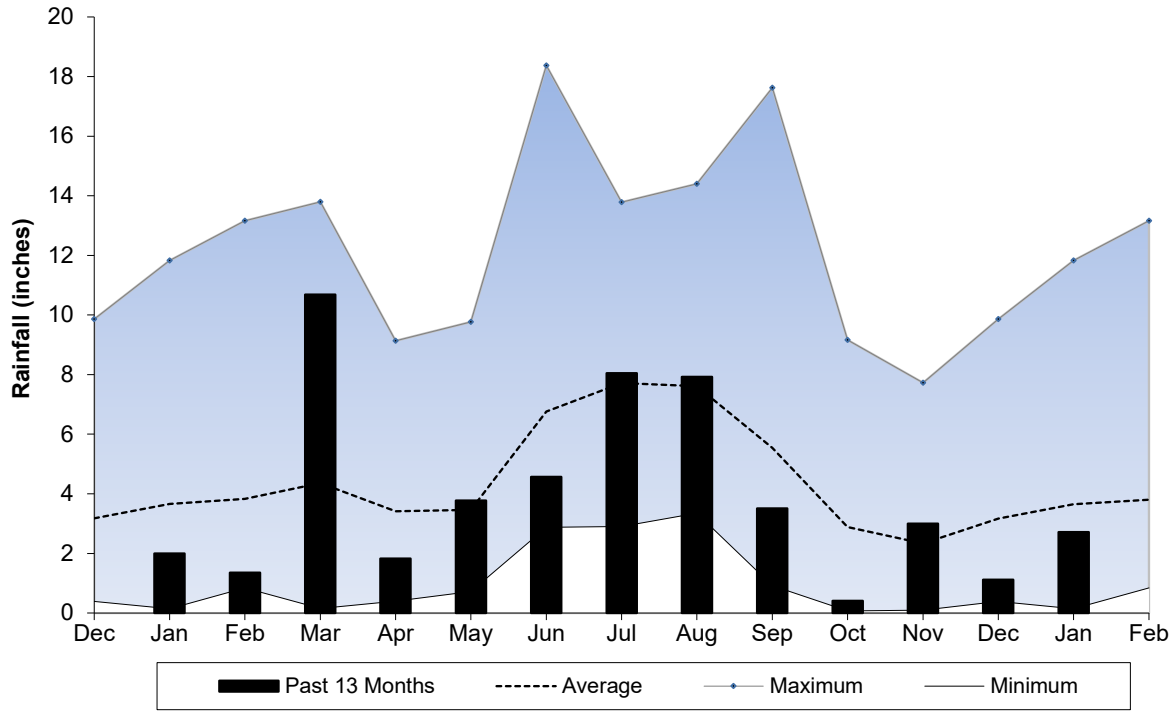


Figure 2: January 2023 SRWMD Gage-adjusted Radar Rainfall

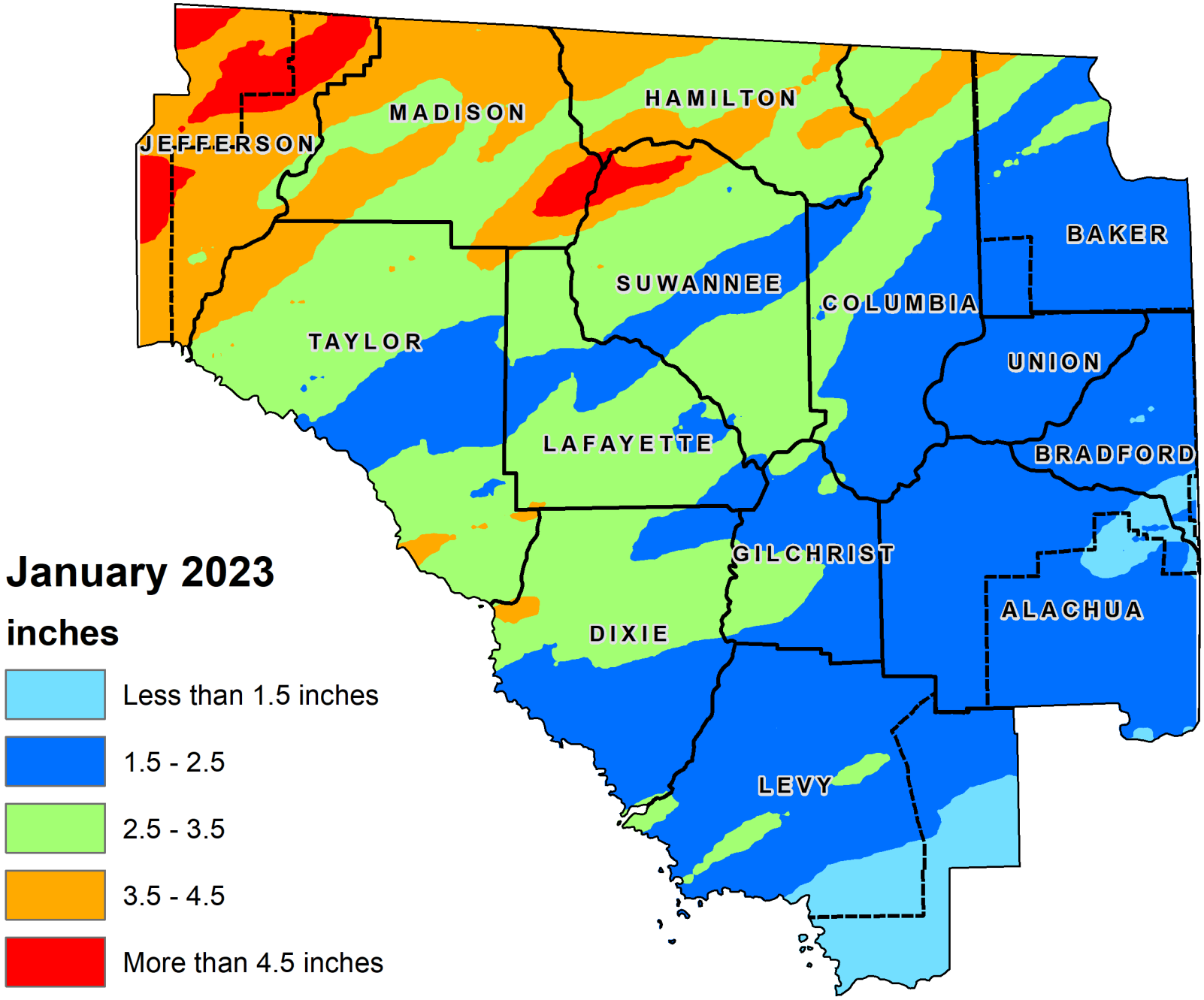


Figure 3: 12 - Month Rainfall Surplus/Deficit by River Basin through January 31, 2023

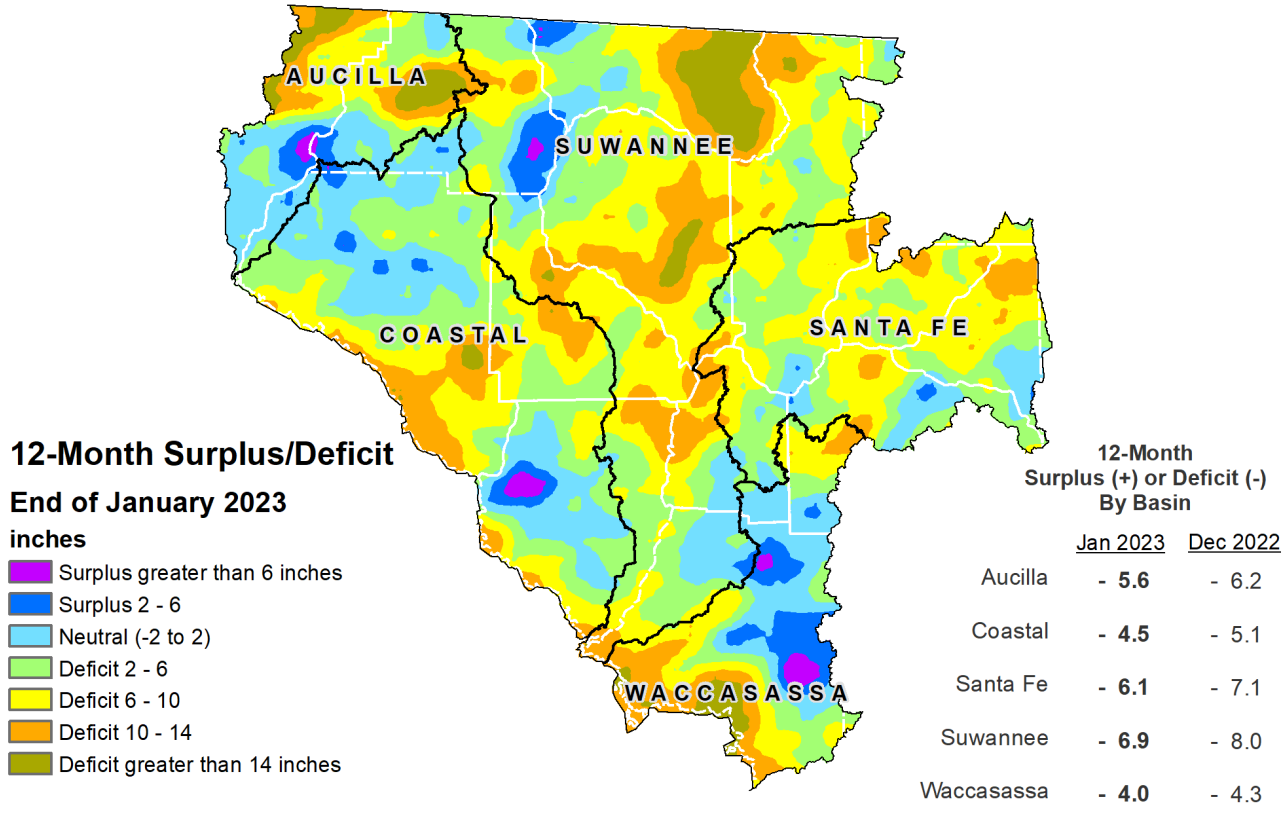


Figure 4: 3 - Month Rainfall Surplus/Deficit by River Basin through January 31, 2023

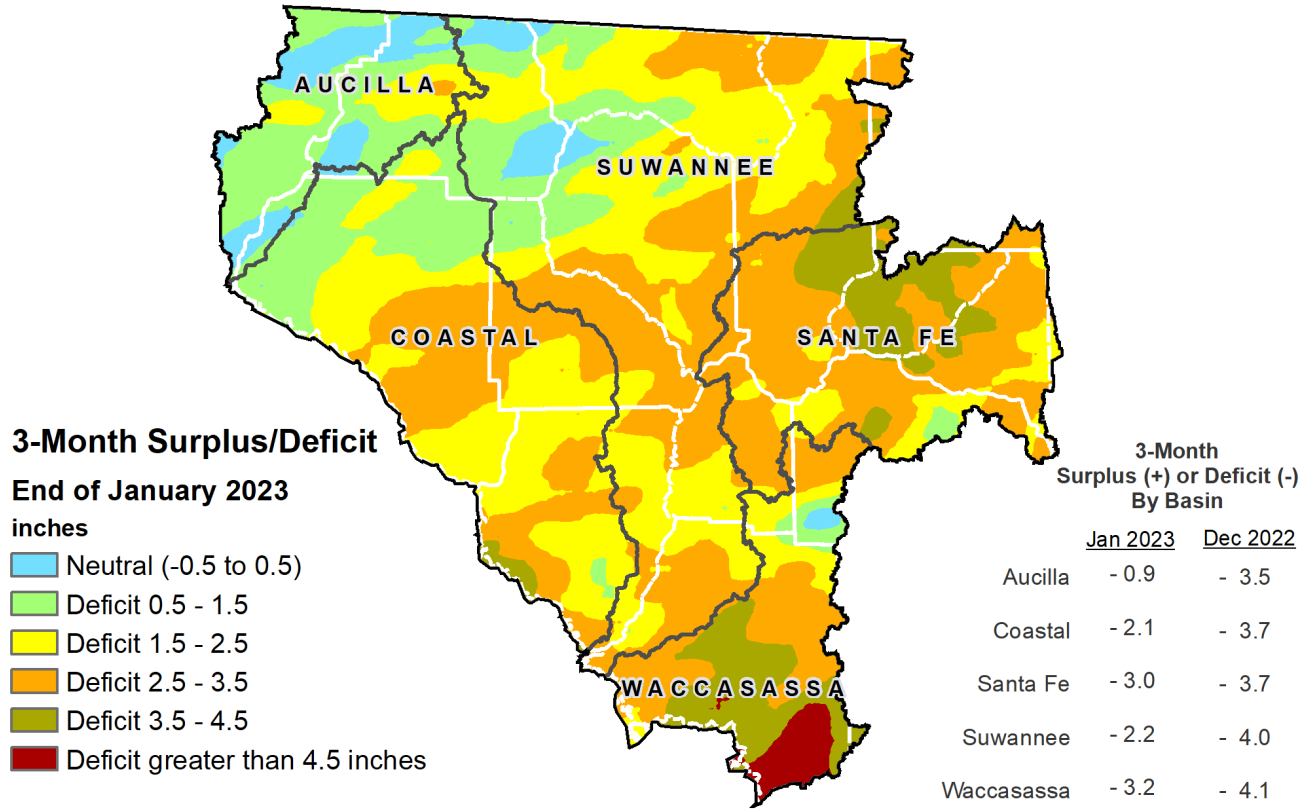
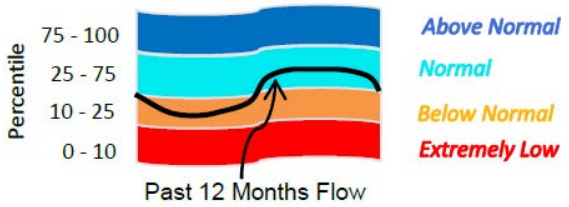
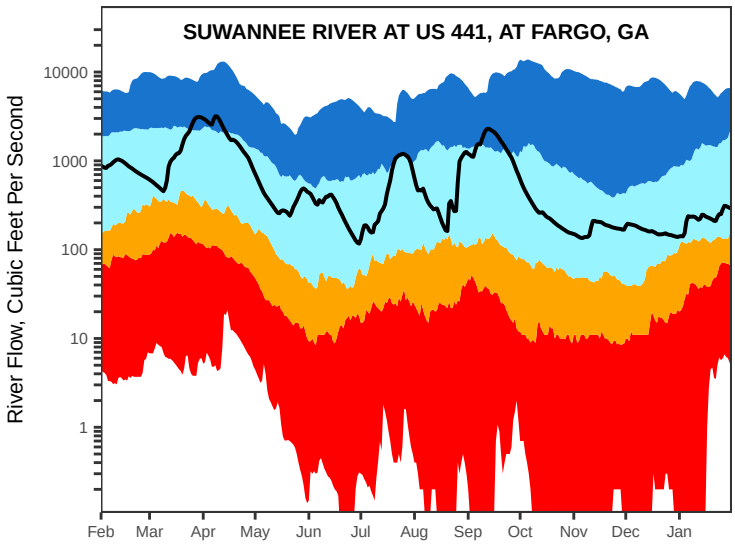
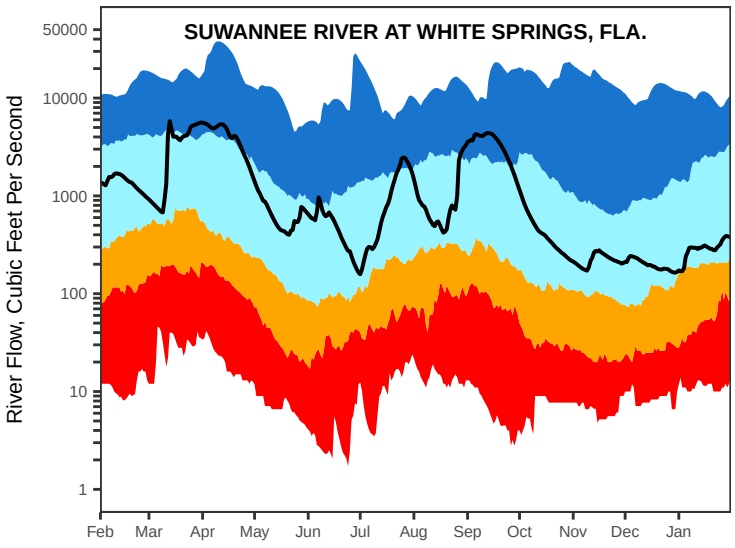


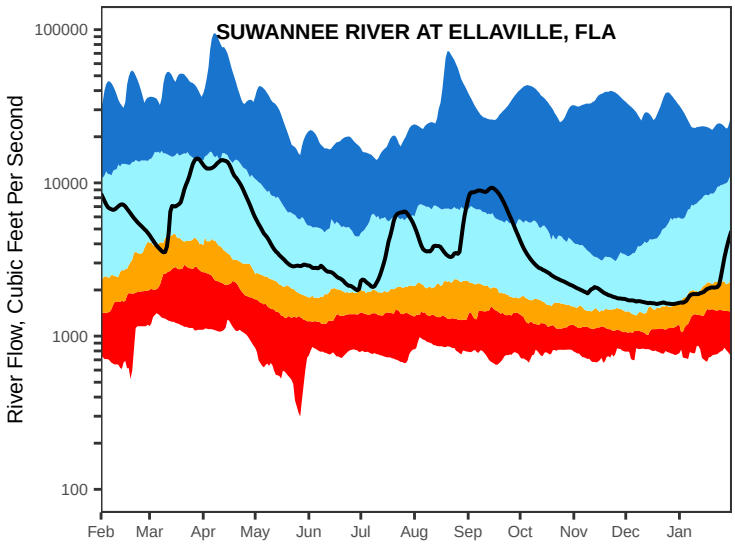
Figure 5: Daily River Flow Statistics

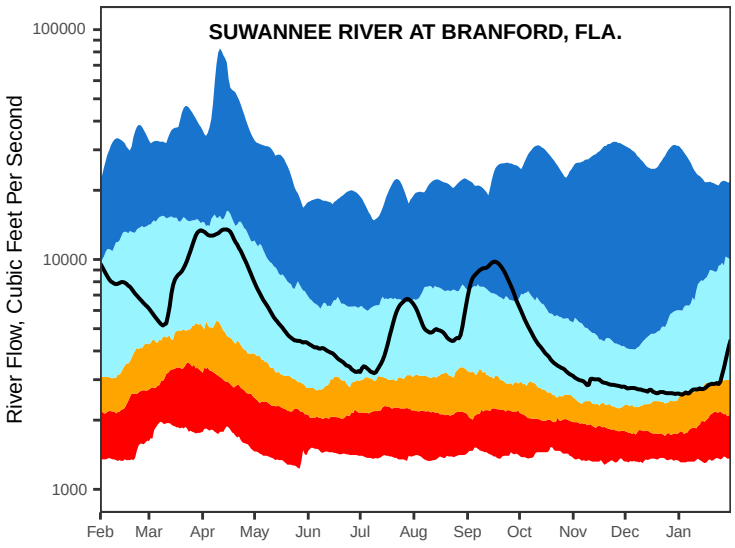
February 1, 2022 through January 31, 2023

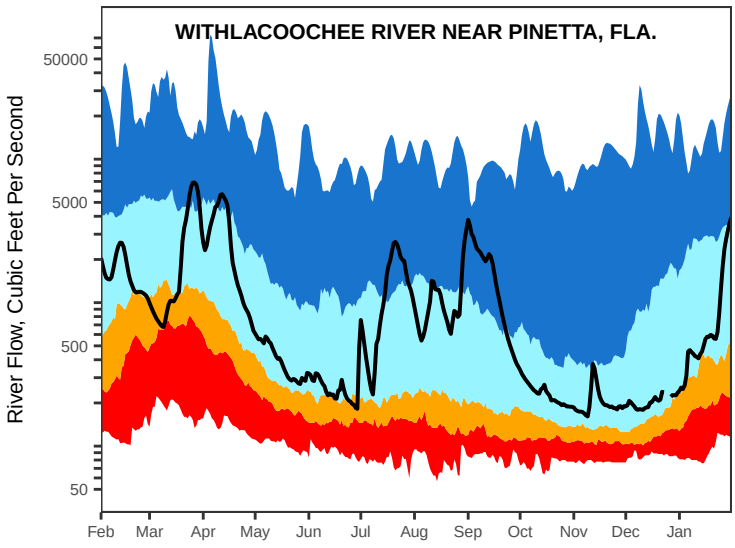












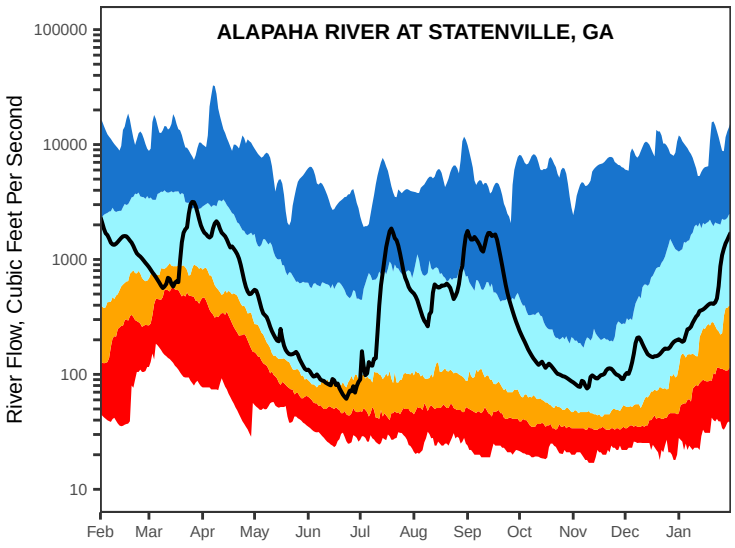
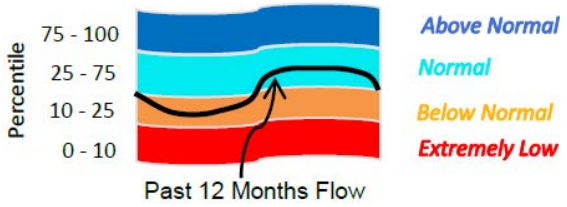
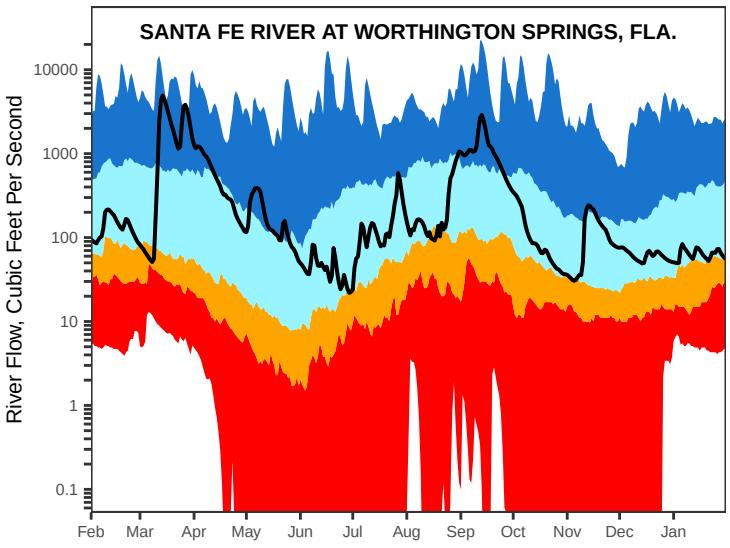
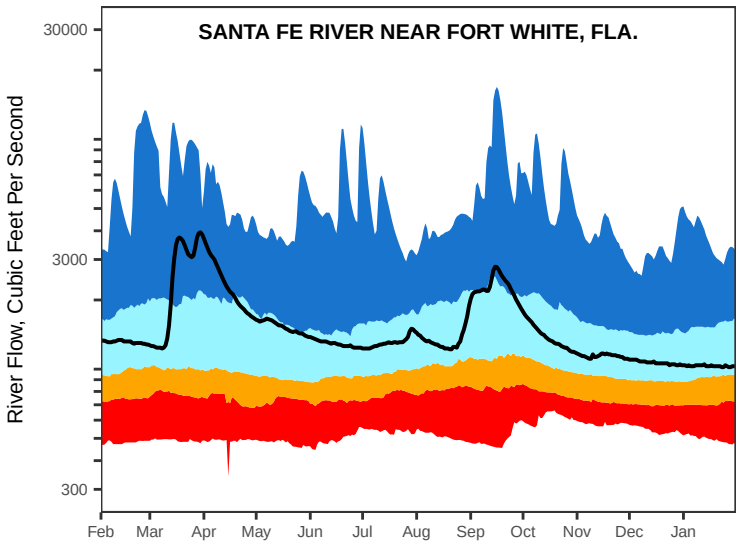


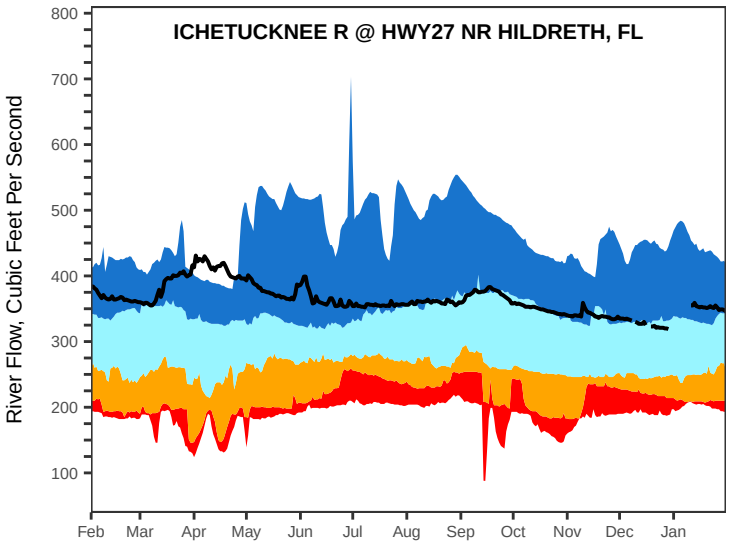
Figure 5, cont.: Daily River Flow Statistics

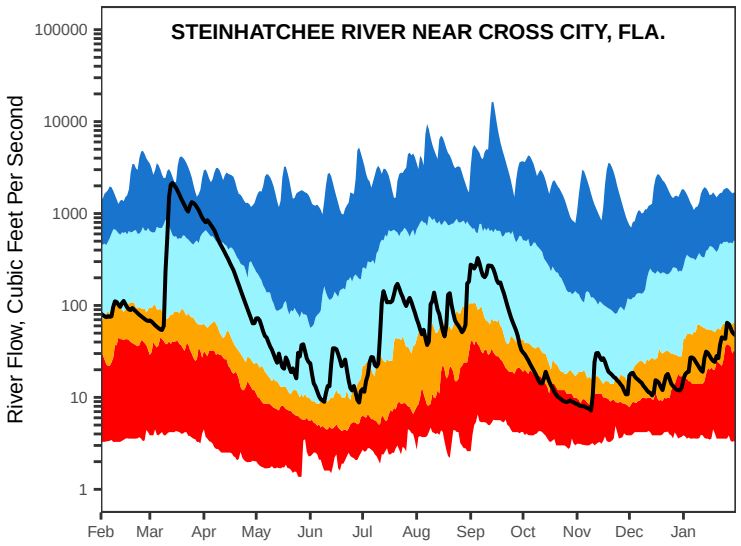
February 1, 2022 through January 31, 2023

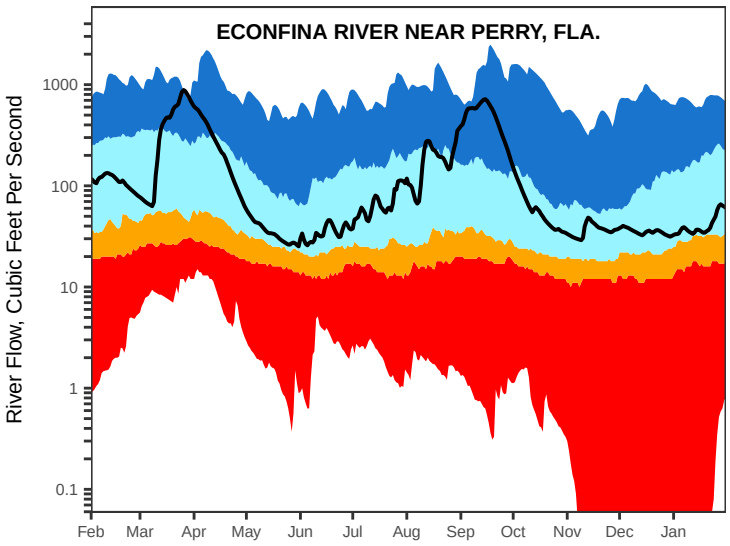












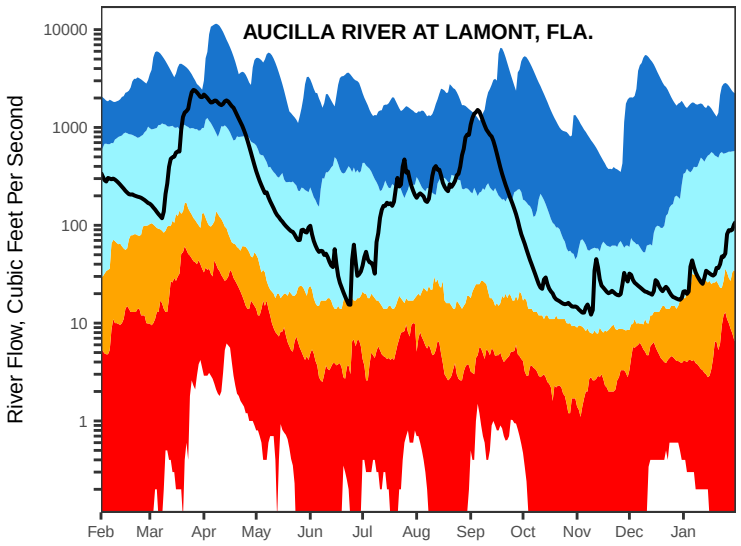
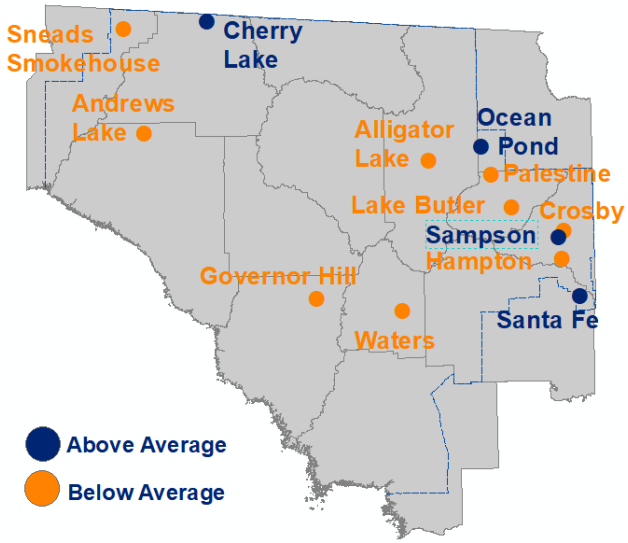



Figure 6:
Streamflow Conditions
January 2023
The Cody Scarp (or Escarpment) is an area of relatively steep topographical change that runs across north Florida. The geology above the Scarp consists of sandy soils over thick layers of mostly impermeable sediments such as clay. Streams are well-developed with dendritic (tree-like) drainage patterns. Because of the impermeable sediments, rainfall is collected in ever-growing surface streams as the land elevation falls. Below the Scarp, sandy soils overlay porous limestone. These areas are internally drained, meaning rainfall runs directly into the ground or into sinkholes instead of forming streams. In these areas, rainfall directly recharges the aquifer, which in turn discharges into rivers via springs and river bed seepage. The Scarp is important to the area's hydrology because it demarcates areas where streamflow is dependent almost entirely on recent rainfall and areas where streamflow is heavily influenced by groundwater.
Alapaha
Alapaha/
Alapaha
Little
Little River
Withla-
coochee
Ochlocknee/
Thomasville
Withla-
coochee
Upper
Suwannee
Withlacoochee/
Quitman
Alapaha/
Statenville
Fargo
Withlacoochee/
Pinetta
North Prong
St. Marys
St.Mark's
Aucilla
Alapaha/
Jennings
St.Marys
White
Springs
Aucilla/
Lamont
Ellaville
St.Marys/
Macclenny
Lower
Suwannee
Econfina
Fenholloway
Branford
Santa Fe
New River
Ft.White
Coastal
Steinhatchee
Worth-
ington
Springs
Graham
Rock Bluff
St.Johns
Wacca-
sassa
The Suwannee River basin encompasses 9,973 square miles, 59 percent of which lies in Georgia. Gage records in the Suwannee basin go back as far as 1906 in the case of White Springs. Many gages have continuous records back to the 1920s. This figure compares streamflow at long-term monitoring gages on the first and last day of the month with past flows on the same dates.
January 1
January 31
Much Below Normal (<10th Percentile)
Below Normal (10 - 25)
Normal (25 - 75)
Above Normal (75 - 90)
High (>90th Percentile)
Cody Scarp
Basin Boundary
Aucilla River Basin
Coastal Rivers Basin
Waccasassa River Basin
Suwannee River Basin
These gages are operated by the USGS and funded by a number of private and public entities, including the SRWMD, SJRWMD, FDEP, Nestle Waters North America, Packaging Corporation of America, and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division (EPD).

Figure 7: January 2023 Lake Levels



SRWMD lakes react differently to climatic changes depending on their location in the landscape. Some lakes, in particular in the eastern part of the District, are embedded in a surficial or intermediate aquifer over relatively impermeable clay deposits. These lakes rise and fall according to local rainfall and surface runoff. They retain water during severe droughts since most losses occur from evaporation. Other lakes, such as Governor Hill and Waters Lake, have porous or "leaky" bottoms that interact with the Floridan aquifer. These lakes depend on groundwater levels to stay high. If aquifer levels are low, these lakes go dry even if rainfall is normal.

The District currently monitors 14 lakes on a long-term basis; much of the data was originally provided by volunteer observers. Monitoring records began in the 1970s, except for Lakes Butler, Sampson, and Santa Fe, which started in 1957.

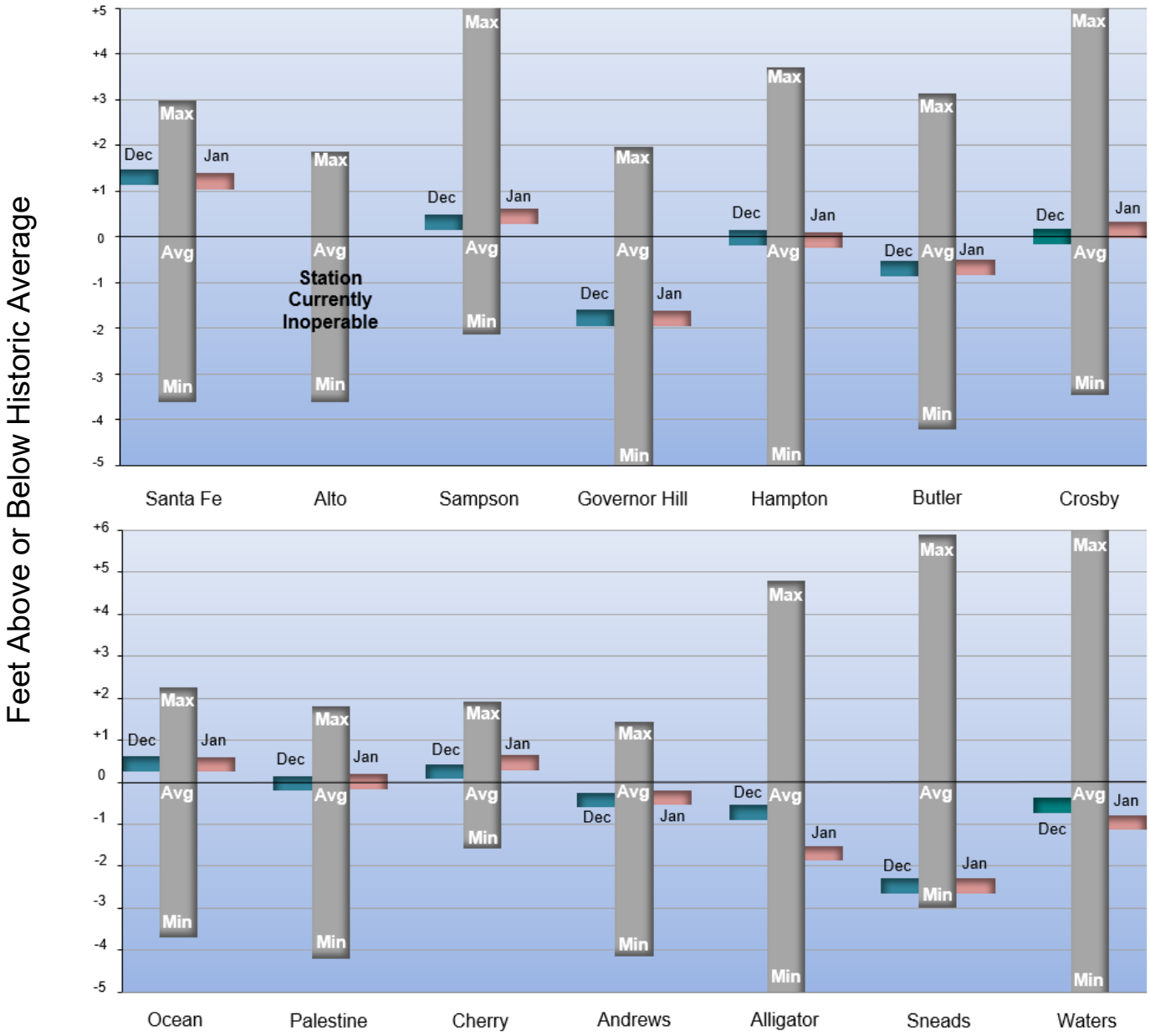


Figure 8: Flow Over the Past 12 Months, Madison Blue Springs (cubic feet per second)

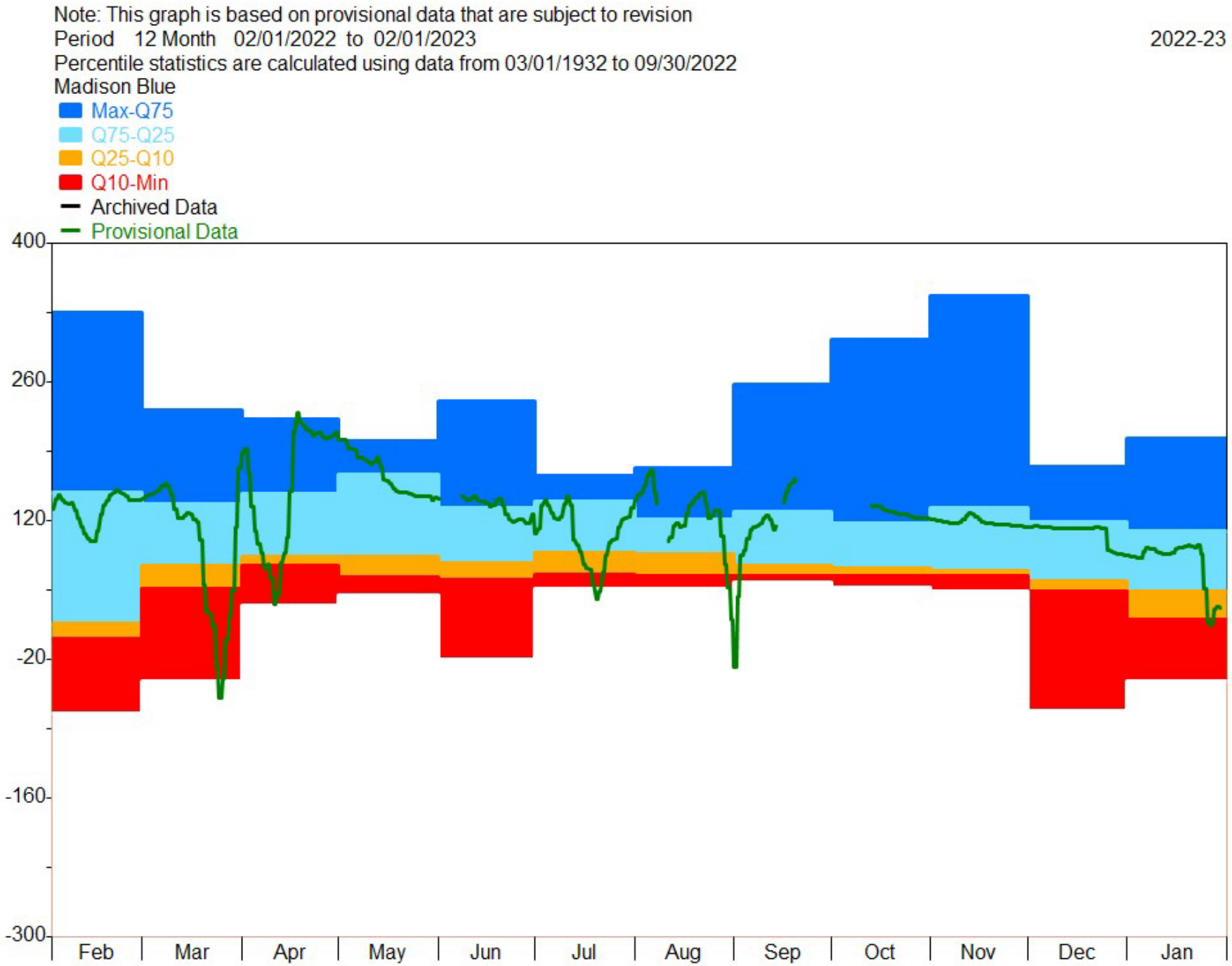
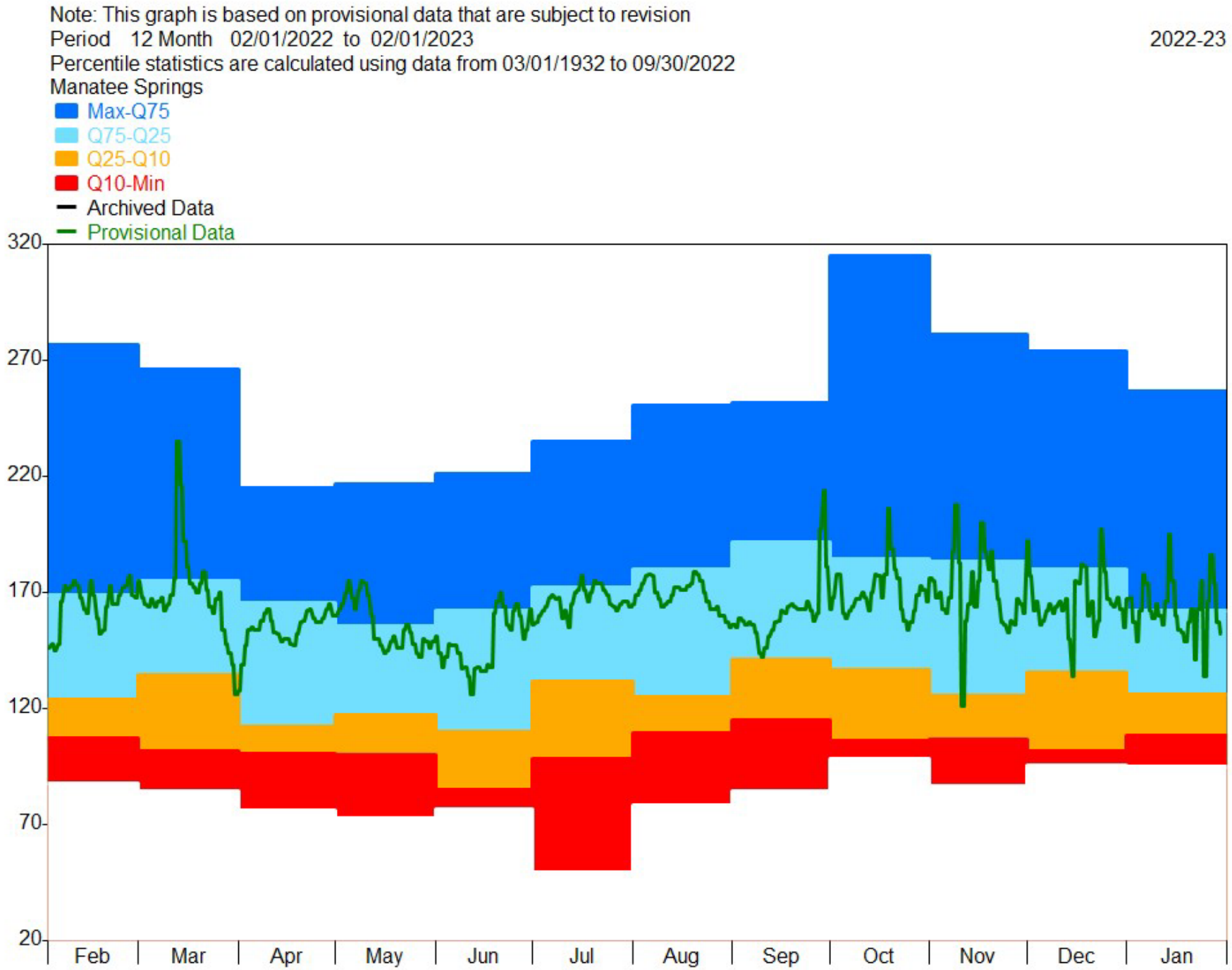


Figure 9: Flow Over the Past 12 Months, Manatee Springs (cubic feet per second)



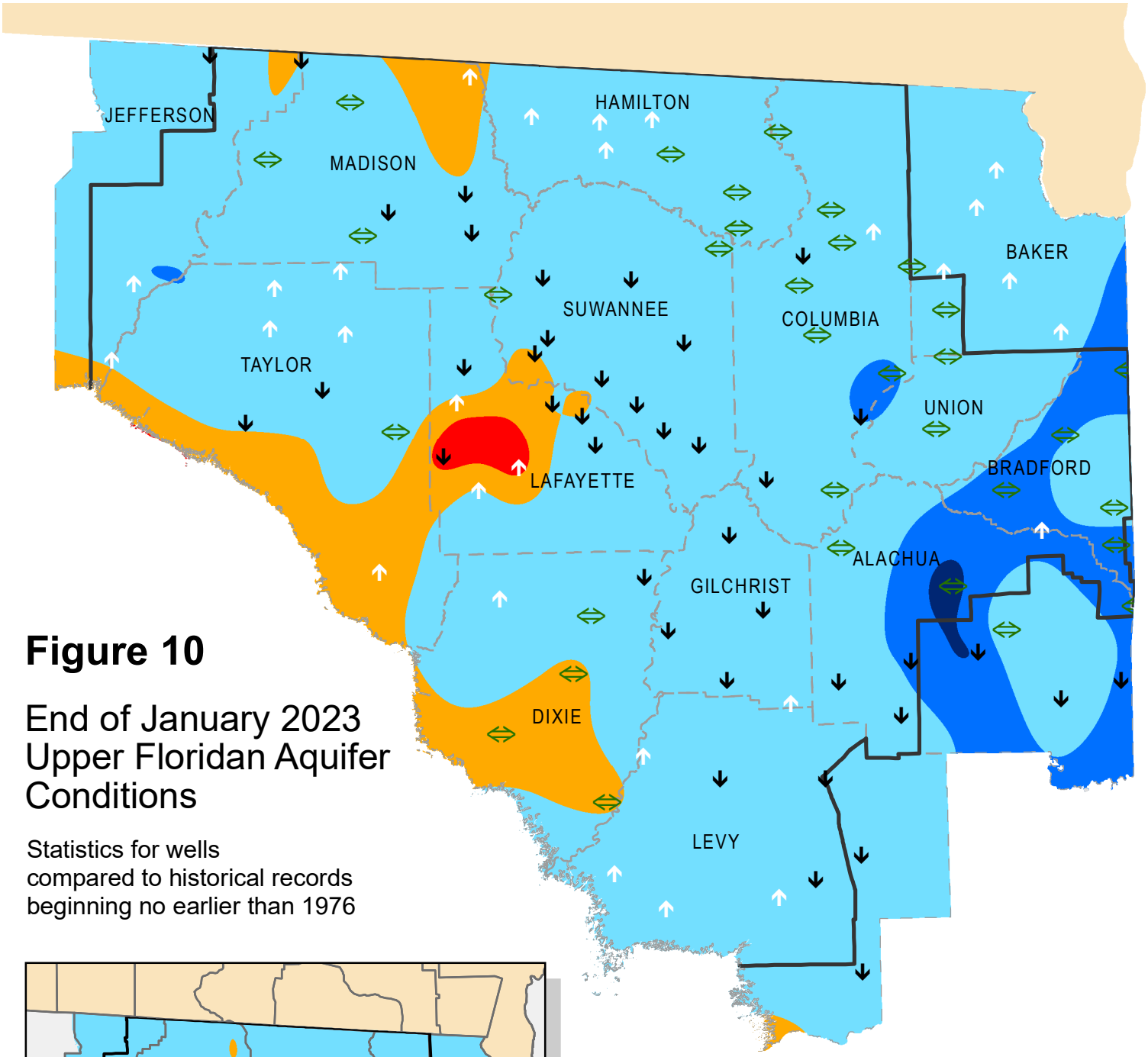
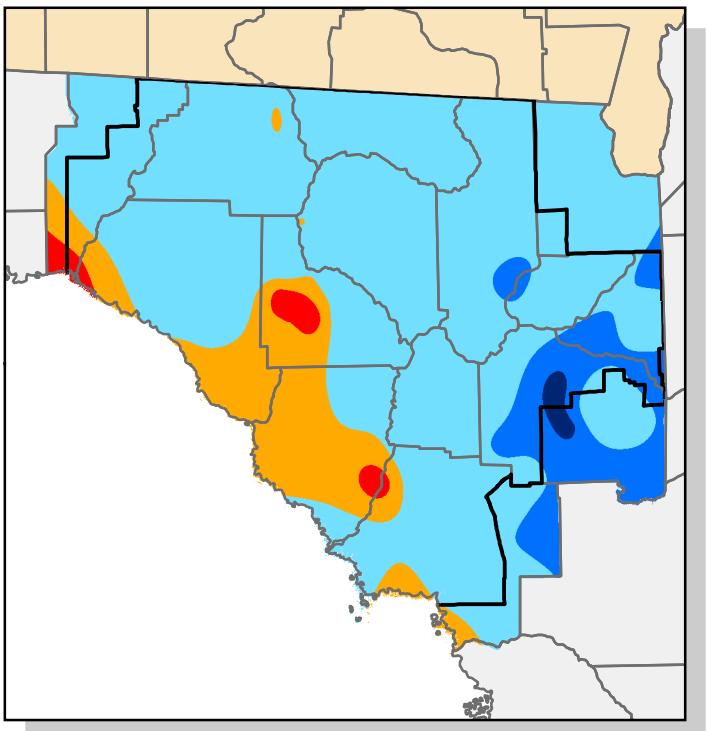


Figure 10

End of January 2023 Upper Floridan Aquifer Conditions

Statistics for wells compared to historical records beginning no earlier than 1976



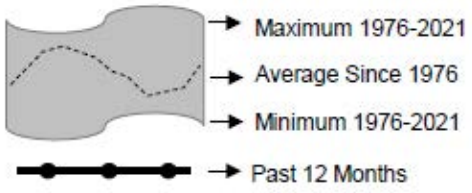
Inset: December Groundwater Percentiles

Additional wells courtesy of SJRWMD, SWFWMD and USGS

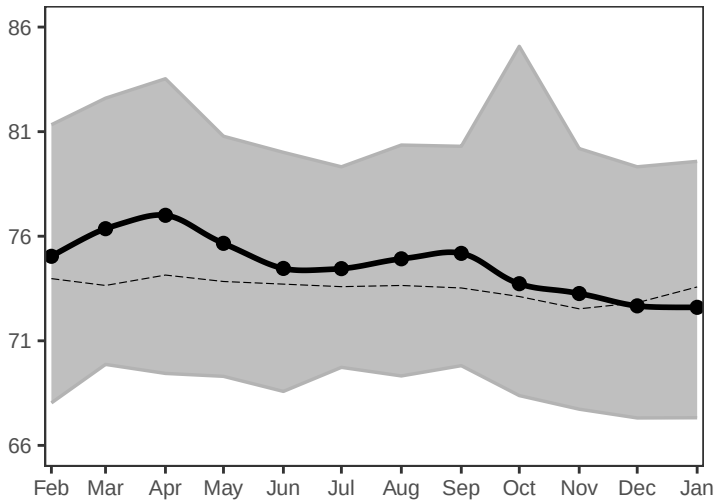
- Extremely High (Greater than 90th Percentile)
- High (75th to 90th Percentile)
- Normal (25th to 75th Percentile)
- Low (10th to 25th Percentile)
- Extremely Low (Less than 10th Percentile)
- Increase/decrease in level since last month
- Increase/decrease since last month less than one percent of historic range
- District Boundary

Figure 11: Monthly Groundwater Statistics

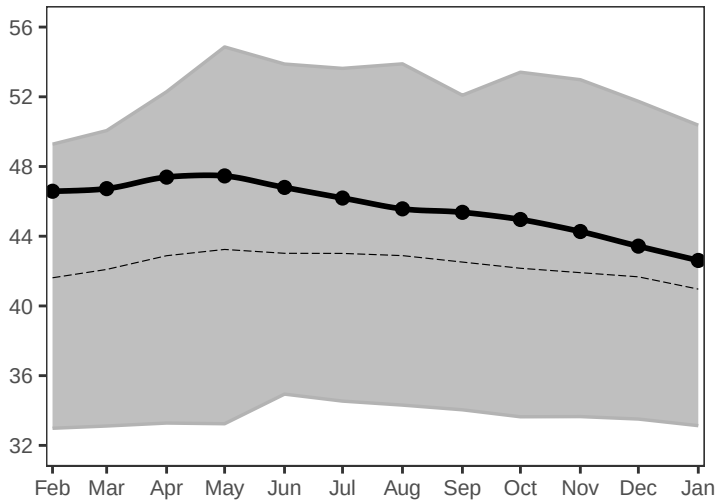
Levels February 2022 through January 2023
Period of Record Beginning 1976



Madison County N010719001
near Greenville

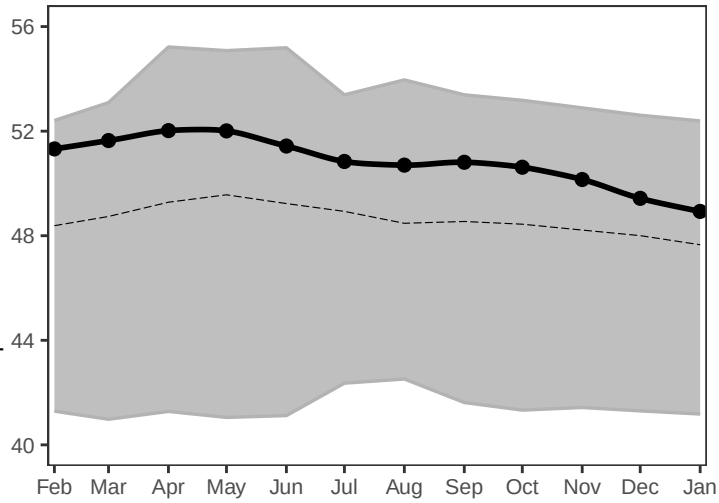


Suwannee County S021335001
near Live Oak

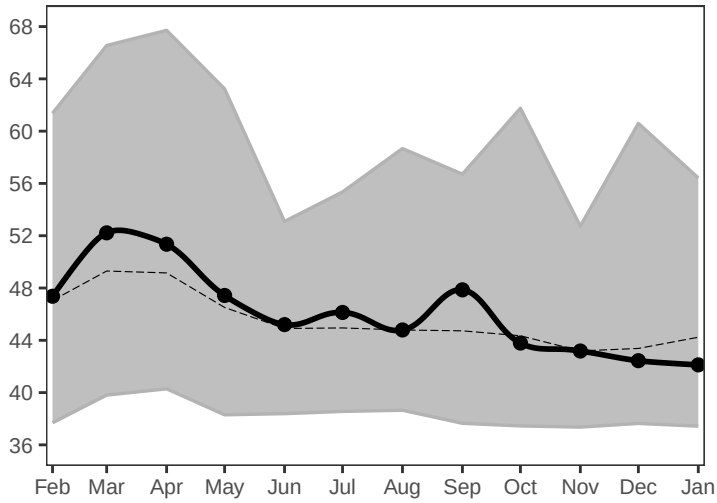


Upper Floridan Aquifer Elevation above NGVD 1929, Feet

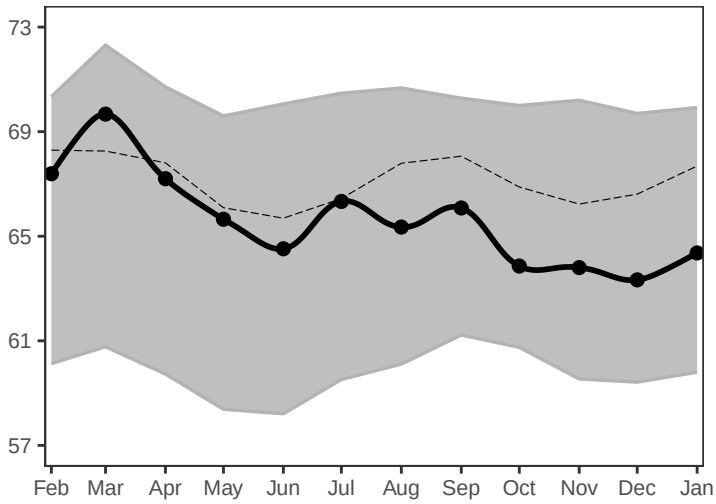
Columbia County S041705001
Lake City



Hamilton County N011422007
near Jasper



Lafayette County S061114001
near Mayo



Taylor County S040736005
Perry

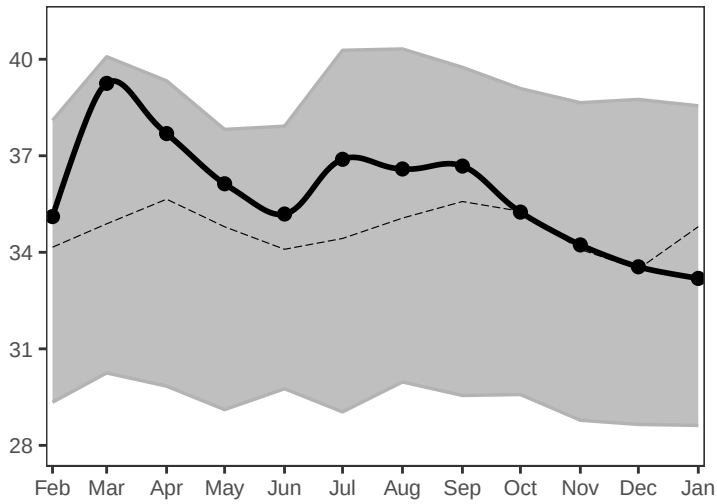
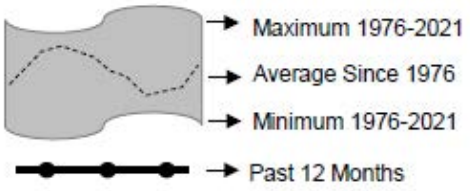
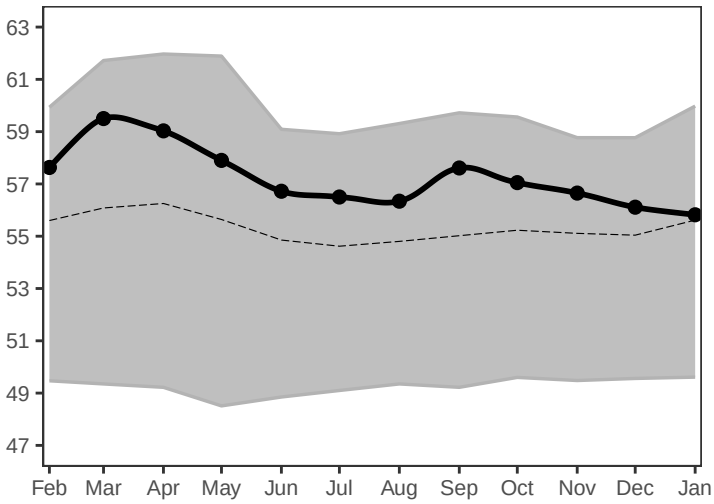


Figure 11, cont.: Monthly Groundwater Statistics

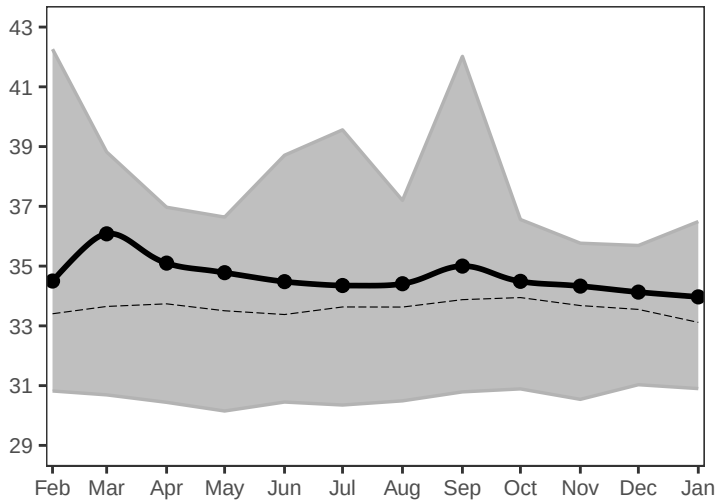
Levels February 2022 through January 2023
Period of Record Beginning 1976



Union County S051933001
near Lake Butler

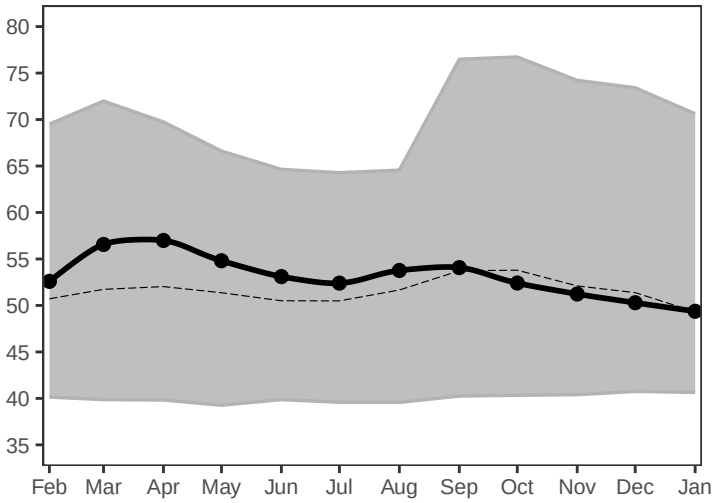


Alachua County S081703001
at High Springs

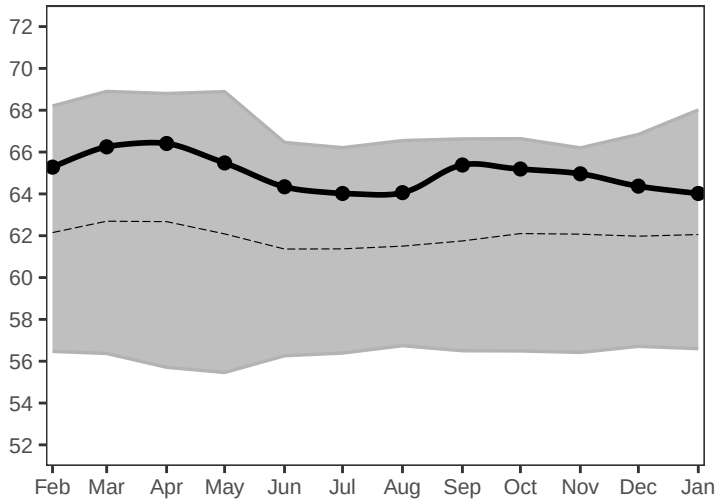


Upper Floridan Aquifer Elevation above NGVD 1929, Feet

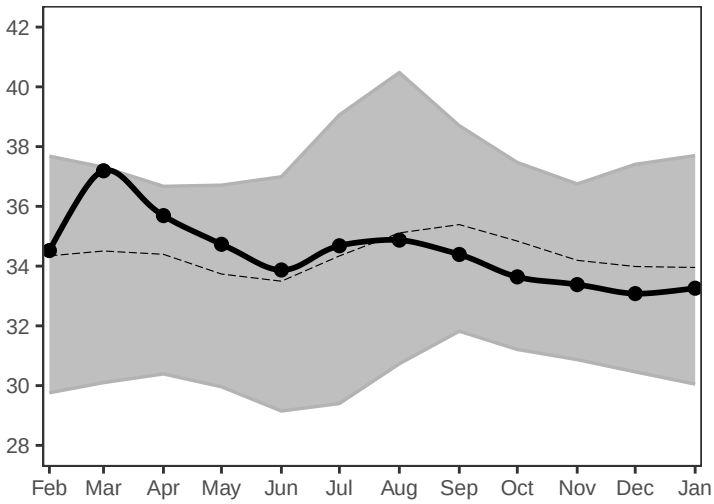
Gilchrist County S091607001
near Trenton



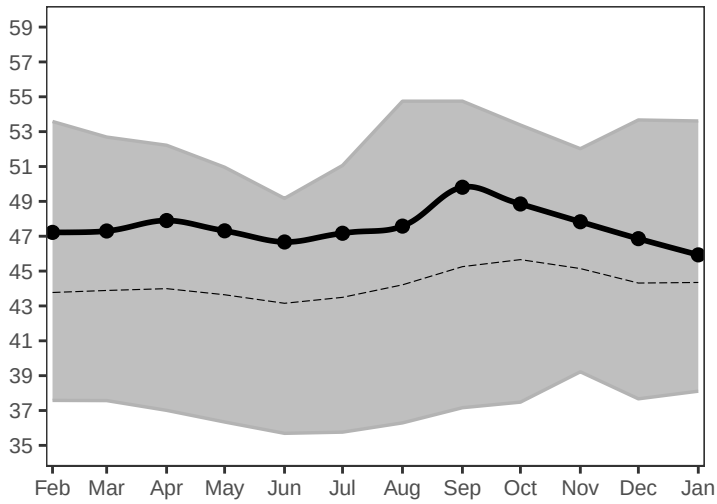
Bradford County S072132001
near Graham



Dixie County S101210001
at Cross City



Levy County S131736001
near Bronson



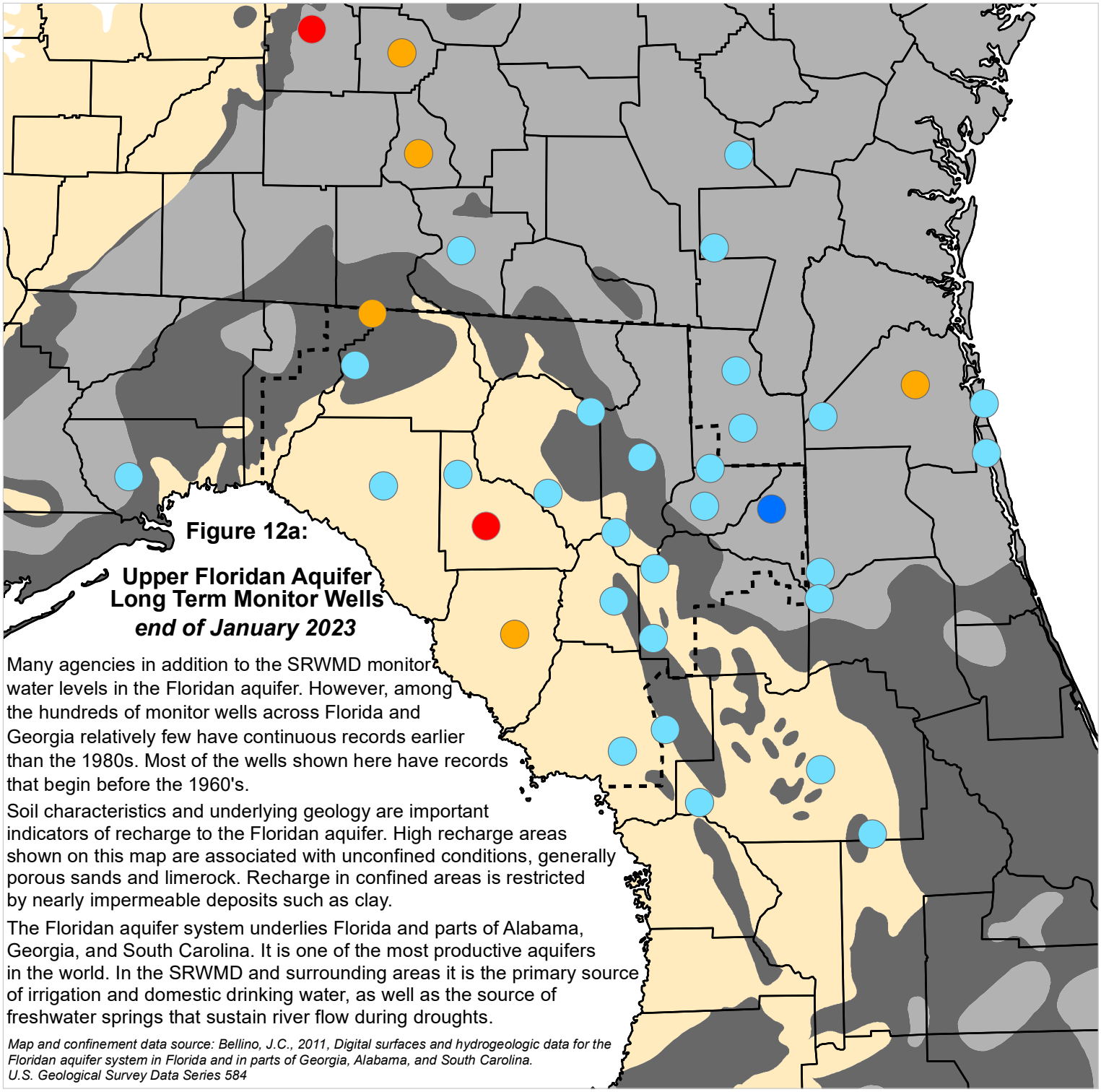


Figure 12a:

Upper Floridan Aquifer Long Term Monitor Wells

end of January 2023

Many agencies in addition to the SRWMD monitor water levels in the Floridan aquifer. However, among the hundreds of monitor wells across Florida and Georgia relatively few have continuous records earlier than the 1980s. Most of the wells shown here have records that begin before the 1960's.

Soil characteristics and underlying geology are important indicators of recharge to the Floridan aquifer. High recharge areas shown on this map are associated with unconfined conditions, generally porous sands and limerock. Recharge in confined areas is restricted by nearly impermeable deposits such as clay.

The Floridan aquifer system underlies Florida and parts of Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina. It is one of the most productive aquifers in the world. In the SRWMD and surrounding areas it is the primary source of irrigation and domestic drinking water, as well as the source of freshwater springs that sustain river flow during droughts.

Map and confinement data source: Bellino, J.C., 2011, Digital surfaces and hydrogeologic data for the Floridan aquifer system in Florida and in parts of Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina. U.S. Geological Survey Data Series 584

Occurrence of Confined and Unconfined Conditions in the Upper Floridan Aquifer

- Confined: Upper confining unit is generally greater than 100 feet thick and unbreached. Recharge is low.
- Semi-confined: Upper confining unit is generally less than 100 feet thick, breached, or both. Recharge is moderate.
- Unconfined: Upper confining unit is absent or very thin. Recharge is high.
- SRWMD Boundary

Percentile of Most Recent Water Level Relative to Entire Record

- Very High (Greater than 90th Percentile)
- High (75th to 90th Percentile)
- Normal (25th to 75th Percentile)
- Low (10th to 25th Percentile)
- Very Low (Less than 10th Percentile)
- Data Not Available

Figure 12b: Regional Long Term Upper Floridan Aquifer Levels

Data through January 2023