



The International Game Fish Association

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Office of Governor Ron DeSantis

State of Florida

The Capitol

400 S Monroe St.

Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Governor DeSantis,

We are writing on behalf of the International Game Fish Association (IGFA) to express our strong support for the 2025 legislative budget providing \$15 million for restoration of the Ocklawaha River. As organizations dedicated to the conservation of game fish and the promotion of responsible angling practices, we recognize the immense benefits that river restoration can bring to both the environment and the angling community.

The restoration of the Ocklawaha River is a critical step towards revitalizing the St Johns River and estuary that will improve conditions for critical fish habitats like eelgrass, saltmarsh, and oysters in the region. By breaching the Kirkpatrick Dam and restoring natural water flow, we can improve water quality, support the recovery of native fish populations, and foster access to and restoration of habitat for a wide range of aquatic species. This, in turn, will contribute to the overall health of fishery resources.

Moreover, transparent planning and stakeholder engagement will ensure the restoration project significantly supports public access to the river, providing new and enhanced recreational opportunities for anglers, boaters, and nature enthusiasts. Improved shore-based access points, piers, and boat ramps will encourage more people to use the river, fostering a deeper appreciation for its natural beauty and ecological importance. This increased public access will also support local businesses and contribute to the economic vitality of the surrounding communities.

One of the key benefits of the Ocklawaha River restoration is the potential for continued and expanded access to Florida bass fishing. The Ocklawaha and St. Johns rivers are renowned for trophy bass fishing, attracting anglers from across the globe. By restoring the river's natural habitats and flow we can ensure that this area remains a premier destination for trophy Florida bass fishing, supporting both recreational and competitive angling. This will not only enhance the angling experience but also contribute to the conservation of this unique and iconic species.

We strongly support the restoration of the Ocklawaha River. We believe that this project will bring significant ecological, recreational, and economic benefits to the region. We applaud your strong leadership to enact this important restoration initiative.

Sincerely,

Jason Schratwieser

IGFA President

The International Game Fish Association is a nonprofit organization committed to the conservation of game fish and the promotion of responsible, ethical angling practices through science, education, rule making, record keeping and recognition of outstanding accomplishments in the field of angling.