MEMORANDUM

TO: Suwannee River Water Management District Governing Board

FROM: Tom Mirti, Interim Division Director, Water Resources

THRU: Noah Valenstein, Executive Director

DATE: January 10, 2015

RE: December 2015 Hydrologic Conditions Report for the SRWMD

RAINFALL

- District-wide rainfall in December was 1.80", a little over half of the long-term average December rainfall of 3.17". All areas of the District experienced below-average rainfall, although parts of Taylor and Madison counties received over 5". Union and Baker counties received an inch or less on average during the month; about a third of the December average amount (Table 1 and Figure 1). Lower rainfall amounts of below an inch predominated in the northeast part of the District and along the New River corridor between Union and Bradford counties (Figure 2). However, rainfall amounts in the Georgia portion of the Suwannee River basin were well above average--particularly in the upper Withlacoochee and Alapaha basins--where broad areas received up to twice the monthly rainfall average (Figure 3).
- The highest gaged monthly rainfall total (4.90") was recorded at the Hopewell Tower rainfall station in southern Madison County, and the highest daily total (2.16" on December 17) was recorded at the Madison Blue Spring rainfall station in eastern Madison County. The lowest gaged monthly total was 0.56" at Suwannee Valley Experimental Station in Suwannee County.
- The rainfall average across the District for the 12-month period ending December 31 was 50.2", compared to the long-term average of 54.6". The cumulative 12-month deficit increased again to 4.4". Rainfall deficits in the western Santa Fe River basin expanded during the month; areas in the Ichetucknee River basin in southern Columbia County are 15" below normal for the year. Cumulative rainfall surpluses persist in the southern portion of the District on a line from Horseshoe Beach to Gainesville (Figure 4).
- Average District rainfall for the 3 months ending December 31 totaled 6.0", about 30 percent below the long-term average of 8.6". The northwestern portion of the District exhibits the largest 3 month surpluses, although these are generally below 5". The largest 3-month deficits remain concentrated in Suwannee and Columbia counties (Figure 5).

SURFACEWATER

- **Rivers:** All major river level stations in the District began the month at or above the normal range of flows (between the 25th and the 75th percentiles), with above normal conditions present in the Upper Santa Fe and Alapaha River basins. The relatively light December rains in the southeastern basins meant decreases in the Santa Fe River stations back to normal flows, while coastal rivers and the Suwannee River stations above Branford increased but remained within the normal range. Suwannee River tributaries in Georgia either remained at above normal flows (above the 75th percentile) or increased to those levels during the month as a result of the high rainfall totals there. Flow statistics for major river stations are presented graphically in Figure 6, and river level conditions relative to historic conditions are provided in Figure 7.
- **Lakes**: Most District monitored lakes declined in stage during December; 6 of 14 are at below average levels. Waters Lake in Gilchrist County declined the greatest amount, at -1.0', while Sneads Smokehouse Lake in Jefferson County increased by 1.4' after

several months at or near its minimum. Figure 8 shows lake levels relative to their respective long-term minimum, average and maximum levels.

- **Springs**: The flow of 27 springs or spring groups were measured by the USGS, District staff, and District contractors during December. Springflows overall increased slightly. Historical flow data for four of the measured springs are provided in Figure 9.

GROUNDWATER

Groundwater levels in upper Floridan aquifer monitor wells continued to decrease across most areas of the District and ended the month at the 57th percentile, a decrease of 2 percentile points from November. The southeastern region of the District remains in the high groundwater level category (above the 75th percentile). Virtually all of the remainder of the District is in the normal range, with two small low range areas (below the 25th percentile) in Lafayette and northeastern Madison counties (Figure 10). Floridan aquifer levels for a representative sample of long-term wells are provided in Figure 11 along with summary statistics, and regional long-term well status is provided in Figure 12 with a description of aquifer characteristics.

HYDROLOGICAL/METEOROLOGICAL INFORMATION

- The Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI), a climatological tool produced by the National Climatic Data Center, assesses the severity and frequency of abnormally dry or wet weather using rainfall, temperature, and soil moisture data. PDSI values for the week ending January 2 showed ongoing near-normal conditions in north Florida and southern Georgia.
- The National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center (CPC) is forecasting above-normal rainfall conditions for January and now projects them to continue through May for north Florida. The current El Niño 3.4 Index level is 2.6, indicating a strong event is in place, and the CPC is projecting strengthening to an index level of 2.8 by the end of January. The current level exceeds the 1997-98 El Niño event peak by 0.3 index units.
- The U.S. Drought Monitor report of January 5 indicated abnormally dry conditions in a band from Dixie County north through Hamilton County. The remainder of the District is within normal conditions.

CONSERVATION

Water conservation is necessary to sustain healthy flows in springs and rivers. All users are urged to eliminate unnecessary uses. Landscape irrigation is limited to twice per week during Daylight Savings Time (between March 9 and October 31, 2015) based on a water conservation rule that applies to residential landscaping, public or commercial recreation areas, and businesses that aren't regulated by a District-issued permit. Information about the SRWMD's year-round irrigation conservation measures is available at www.mysuwanneeriver.com.

This report is compiled in compliance with Chapter 40B-21.211, Florida Administrative Code, using rainfall (radar-derived estimate), groundwater (105 wells), surfacewater (35 stations), and general information such as drought indices and forecasts. Data are provisional and are updated as revised data become available. Data are available at www.mysuwanneeriver.com or by request.

Table 1: Estimated Rainfall Totals (inches)

County	December 2015	December Average	Month % of Normal	Last 12 Months	Annual % of Normal
Alachua	1.50	2.77	54%	48.56	95%
Baker	0.88	2.77	32%	45.38	91%
Bradford	1.26	2.95	43%	40.92	81%
Columbia	1.30	3.08	42%	50.18	98%
Dixie	1.77	3.17	56%	45.77	77%
Gilchrist	1.75	3.07	57%	47.87	83%
Hamilton	2.34	2.98	78%	53.84	103%
Jefferson	2.67	4.25	63%	48.23	80%
Lafayette	1.78	3.33	54%	49.65	88%
Levy	1.54	3.18	49%	48.49	81%
Madison	3.21	3.79	85%	48.80	87%
Suwannee	1.35	2.79	48%	51.96	98%
Taylor	2.75	3.39	81%	47.84	80%
Union	1.05	2.86	37%	46.00	85%

December 2015 Average:	1.80
December Average (1932-2013):	3.17
Historical 12-month Average (1932-2013):	54.63
Past 12-Month Total:	50.19
12-Month Rainfall Surplus/Deficit:	-4.44

Figure 1: Comparison of District-wide Monthly Rainfall

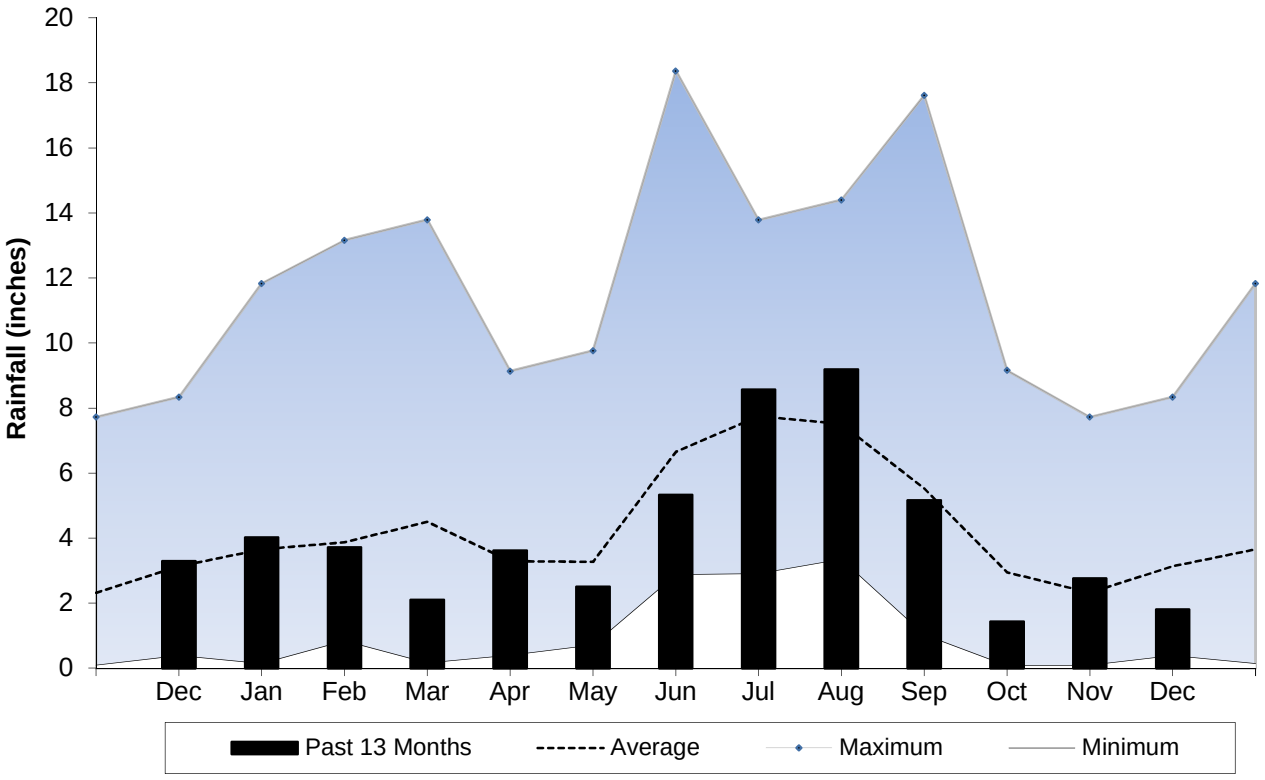


Figure 2: December 2015 Rainfall Estimate

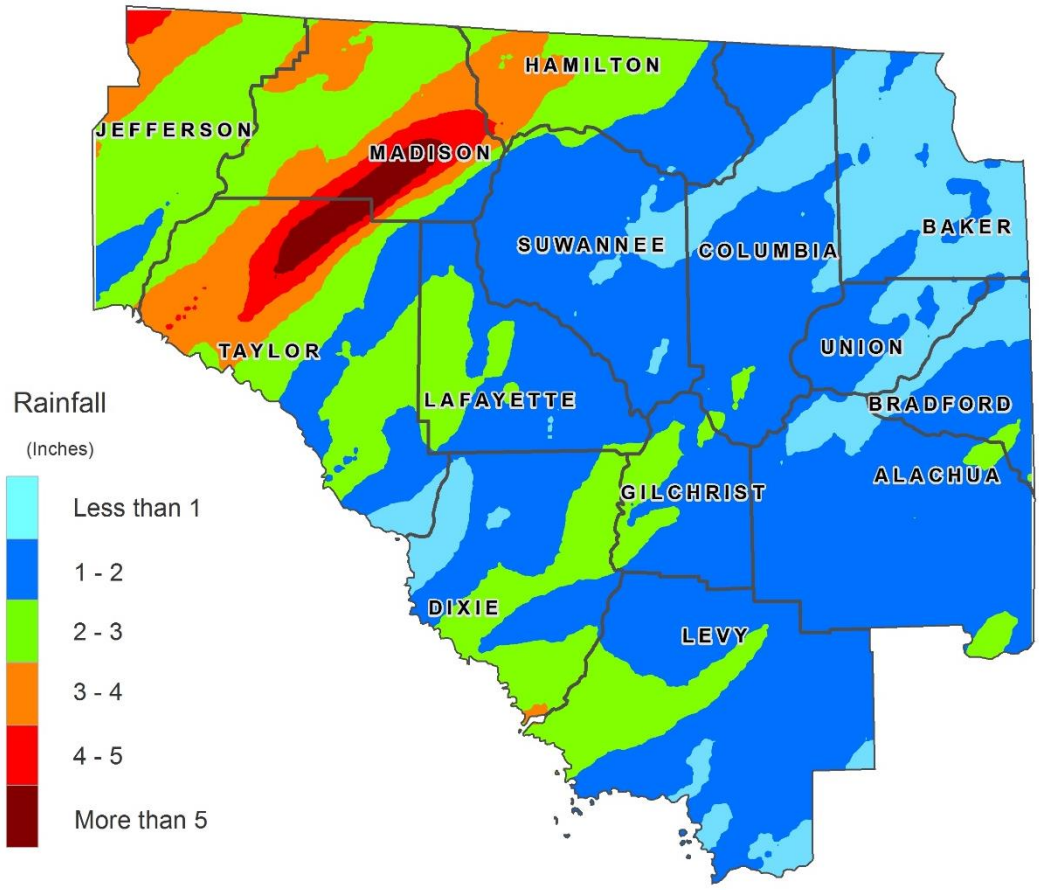


Figure 3: December 2015 Percent of Normal Rainfall

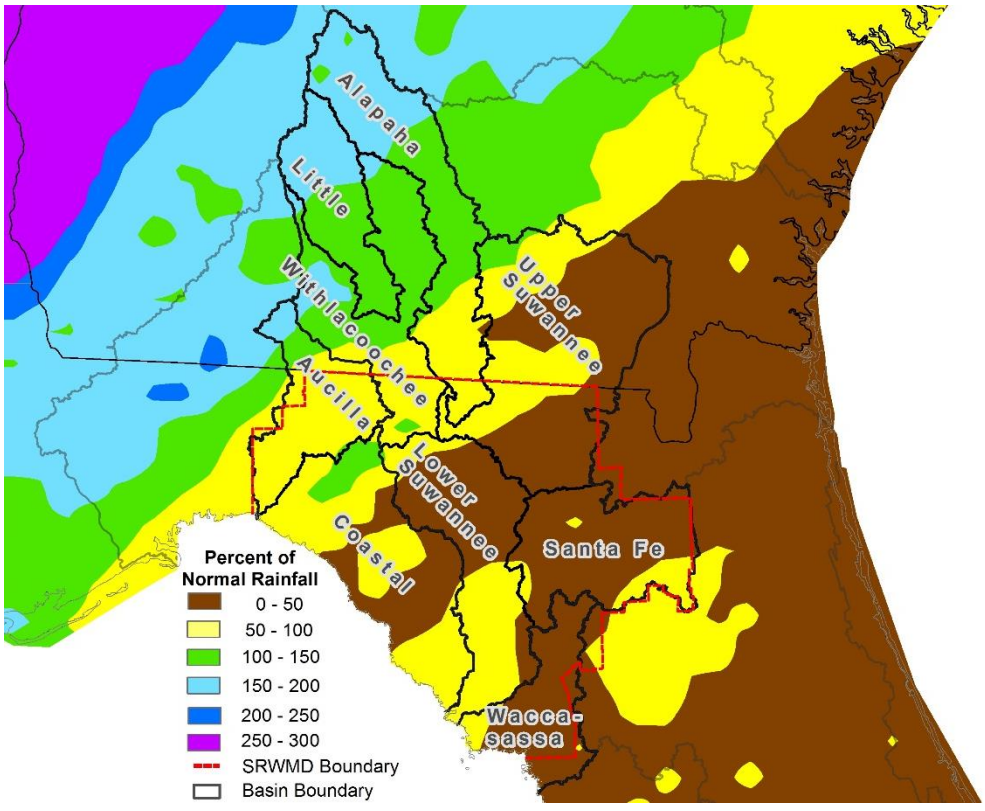


Figure 4: 12-Month Rainfall Surplus/Deficit by River Basin
Through December 31, 2015

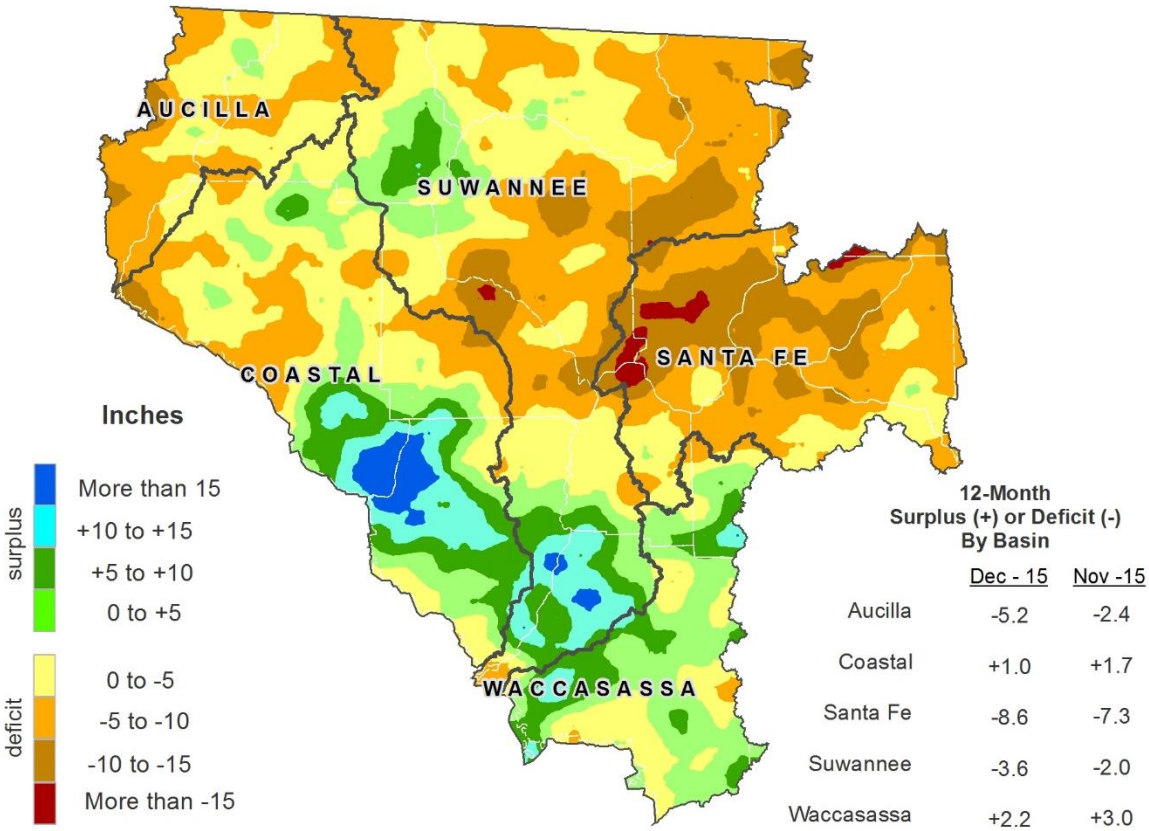


Figure 5: 3-Month Rainfall Surplus/Deficit by River Basin
Through December 31, 2015

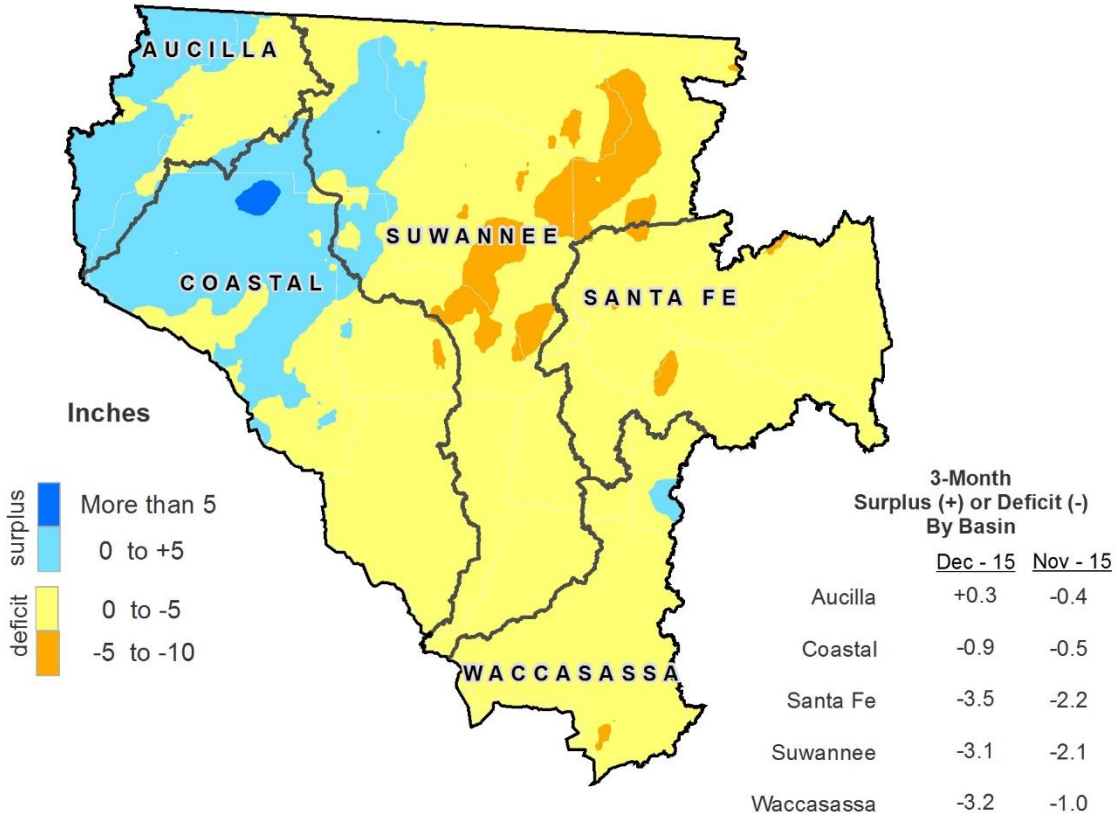


Figure 6: Daily River Flow Statistics
January 1 through December 31, 2015

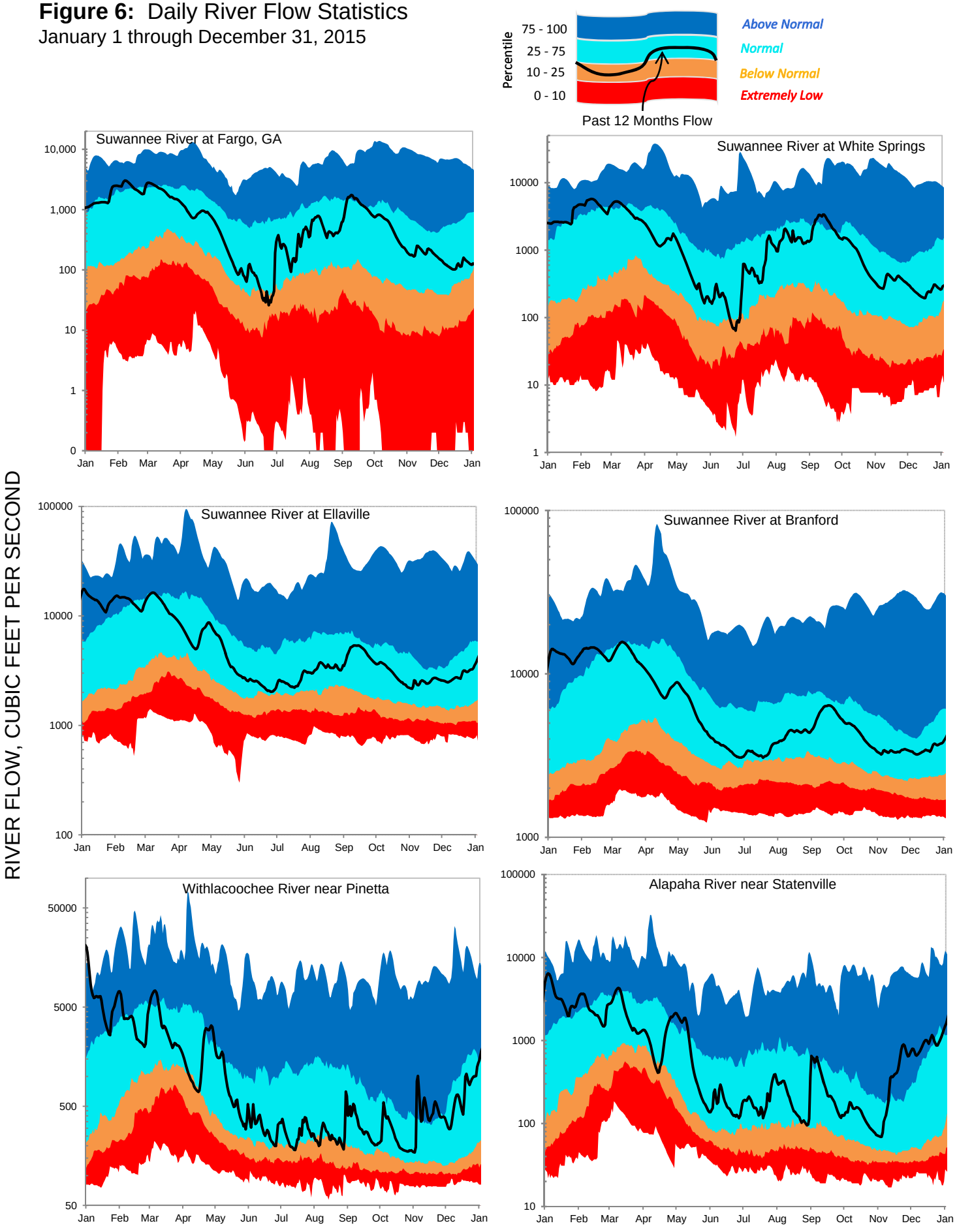
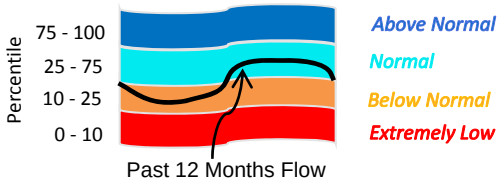
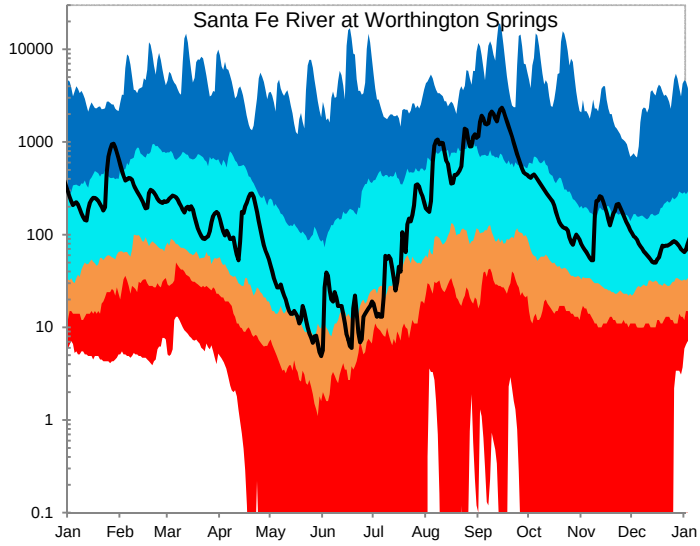
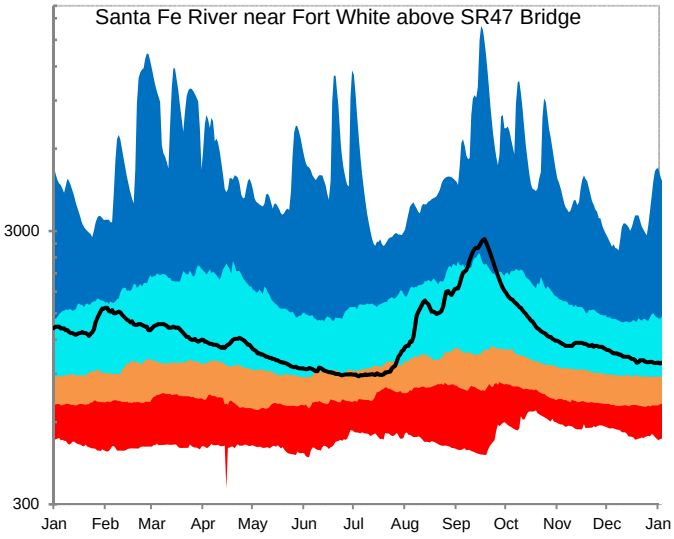


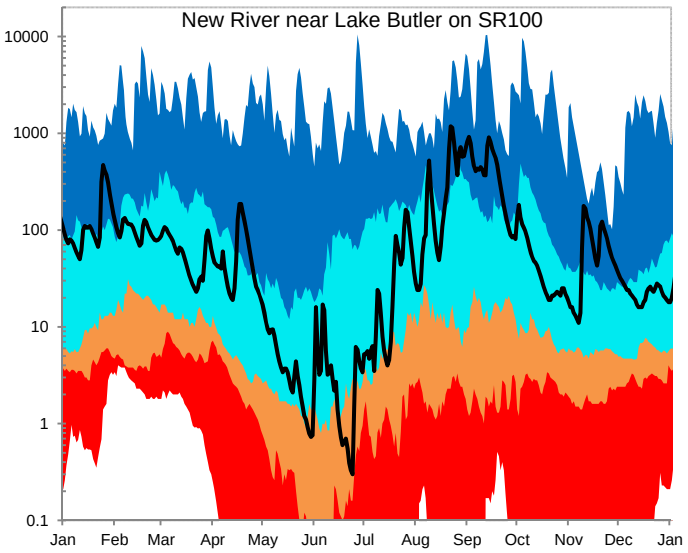
Figure 6, cont: Daily River Flow Statistics
January 1 through December 31, 2015

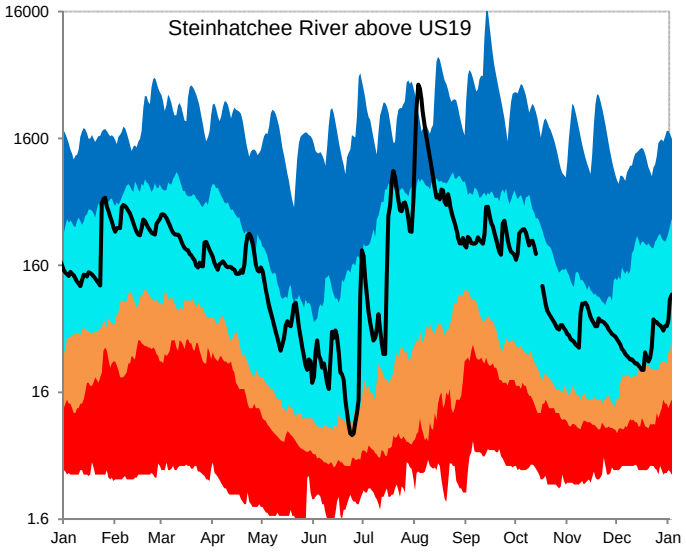


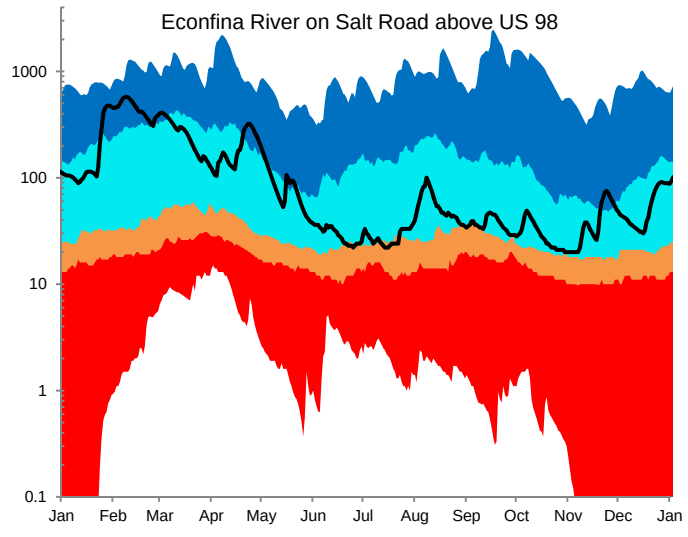
RIVER FLOW, CUBIC FEET PER SECOND

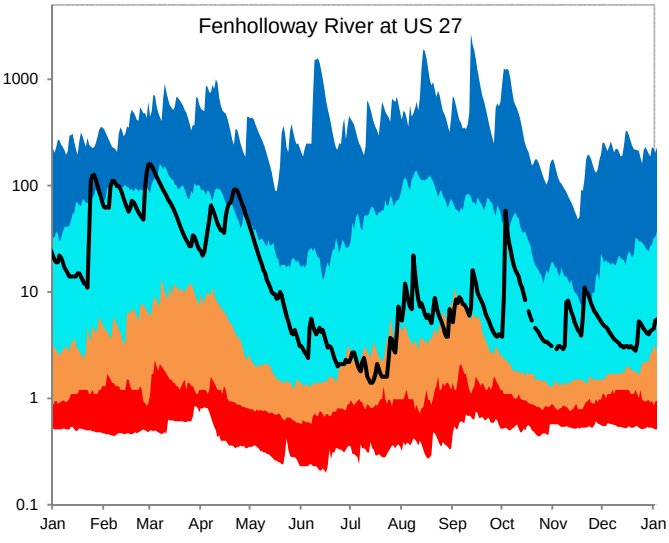












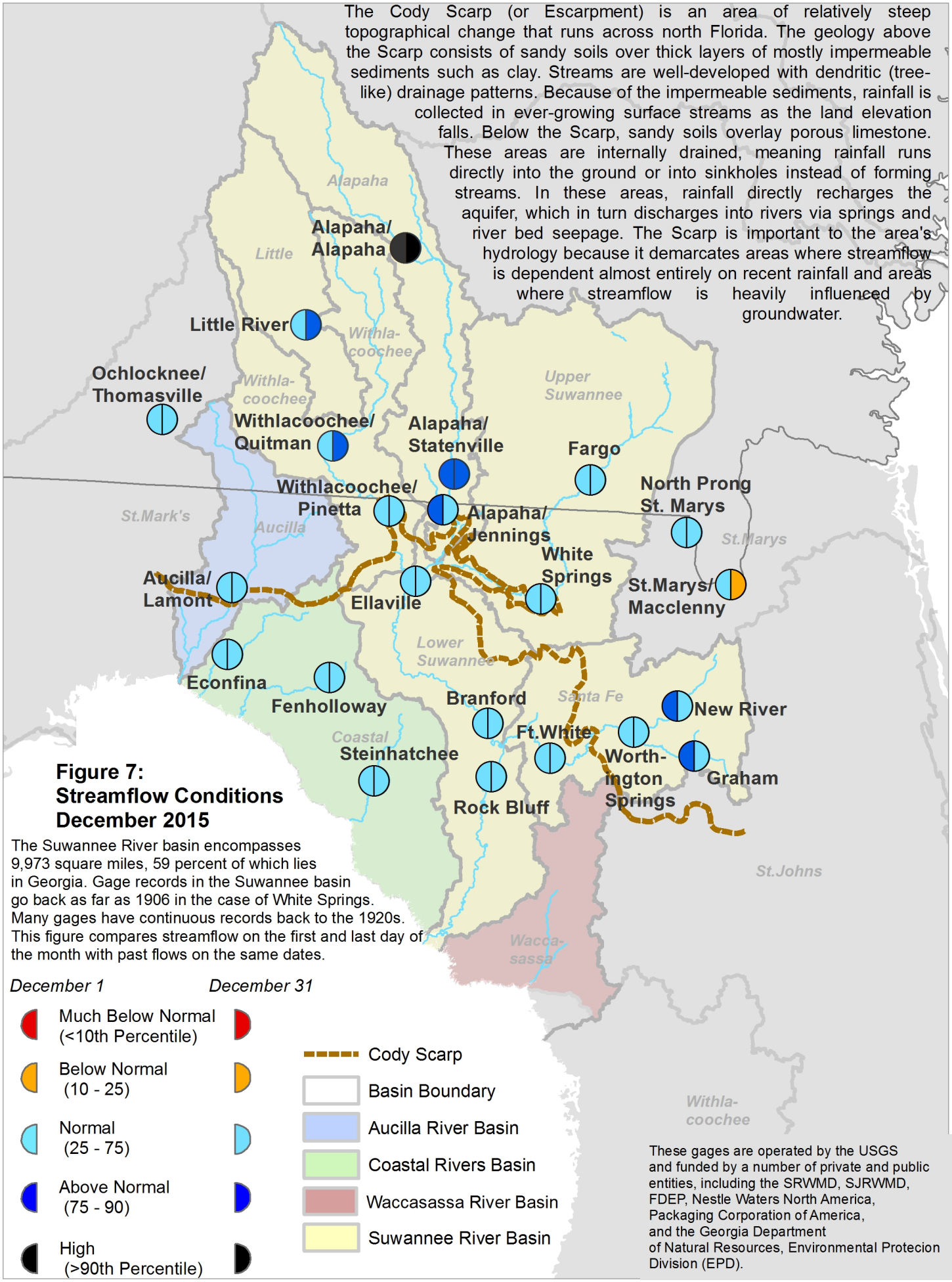
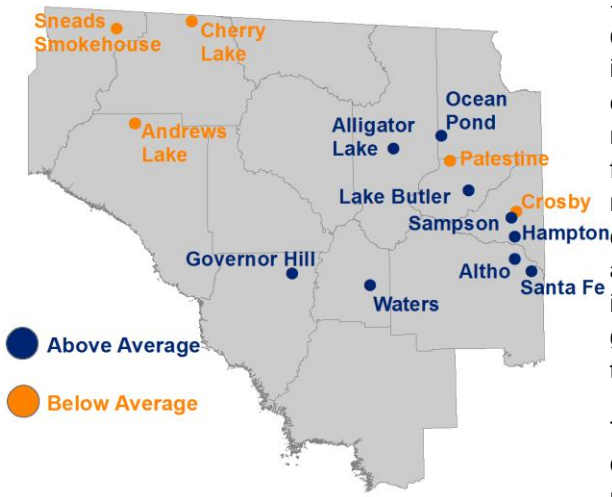

The Cody Scarp (or Escarpment) is an area of relatively steep topographical change that runs across north Florida. The geology above the Scarp consists of sandy soils over thick layers of mostly impermeable sediments such as clay. Streams are well-developed with dendritic (tree-like) drainage patterns. 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
Withla-coochee
Figure 7:
Streamflow Conditions
December 2015
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 on the first and last day of the month with past flows on the same dates.
December 1
December 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 Protecion Division (EPD).

Figure 8: December 2015 Lake Levels



SRWMD lakes react differently to climatic changes depending on their location in the landscape. Some lakes, in particular ones 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 monitors 14 lakes with much of the data originally provided by volunteer observers. Monitoring records begin in the 1970s, except for Lakes Butler, Sampson, and Santa Fe, which started in 1957.

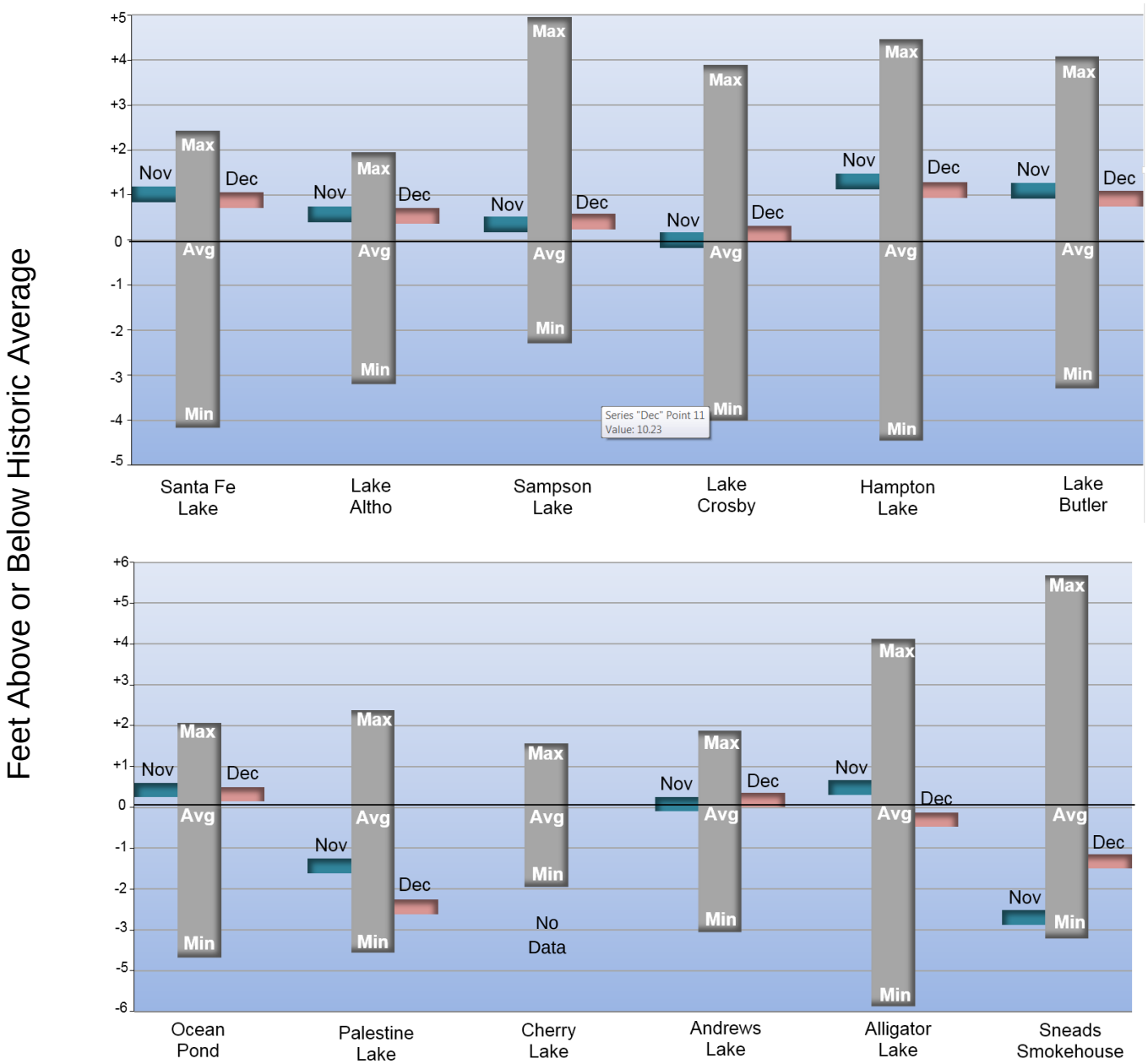
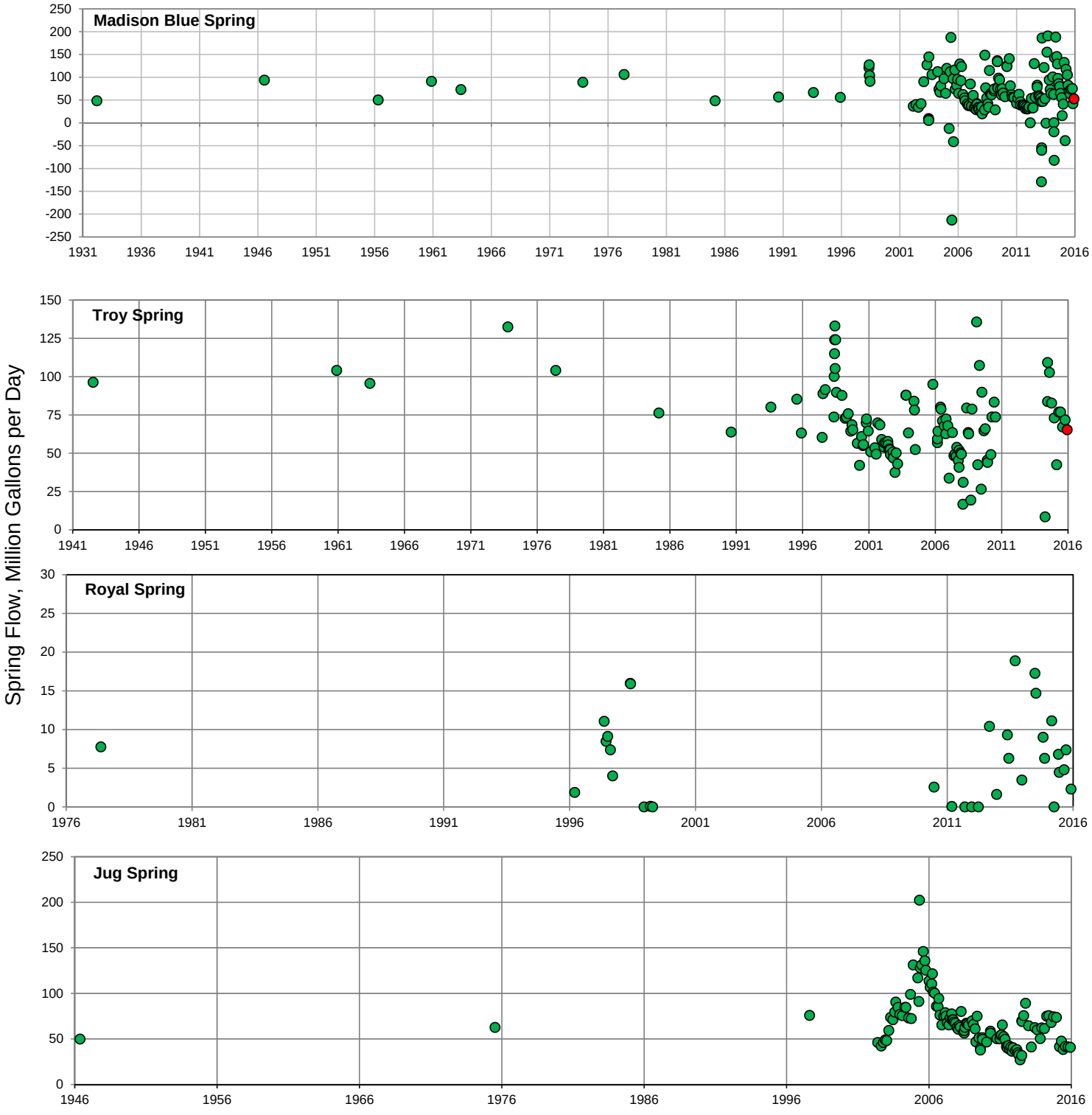


Figure 9: Monthly Springflow Measurements

The SRWMD monitors water quality at 38 springs. Flow is usually measured at the time of the sampling. The springs below were measured in December 2015 by SRWMD staff or by the USGS with the last measurement marked in red. Flow is given in MGD (million gallons per day--a million gallons would fill a football field about 3' deep). With the exception of the Ichetucknee River, Santa Fe Rise and the Alapaha Rise, springs in the SRWMD were measured infrequently prior to the late 1990s. Springs with long records were rarely measured more than once per decade; 'reverse' flow measurements have only been made during the past 10 years.

A spring's flow can be greatly affected by the level of the river it runs into. Rising river levels can act like a dam and slow spring flow causing what is known as a backwater effect. A river can flood a spring completely, known colloquially as a "brown-out". If the river levels are high enough, river water can flow back into the spring vent and thence into the aquifer, resulting in a negative flow rate. Because of the interaction between a spring and its receiving water body, some low flow measurements recorded are the result of river flooding and not necessarily drought conditions.



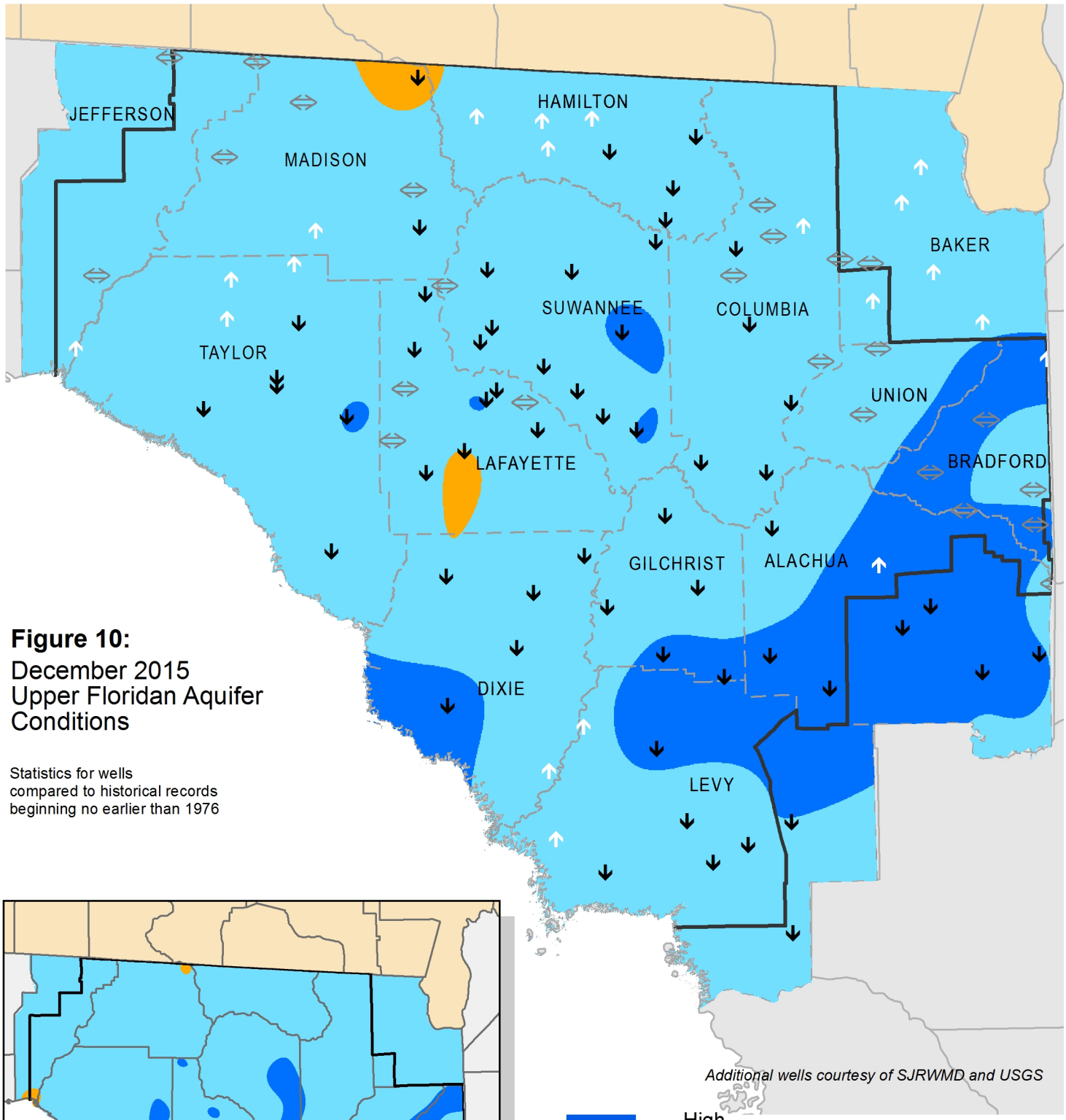
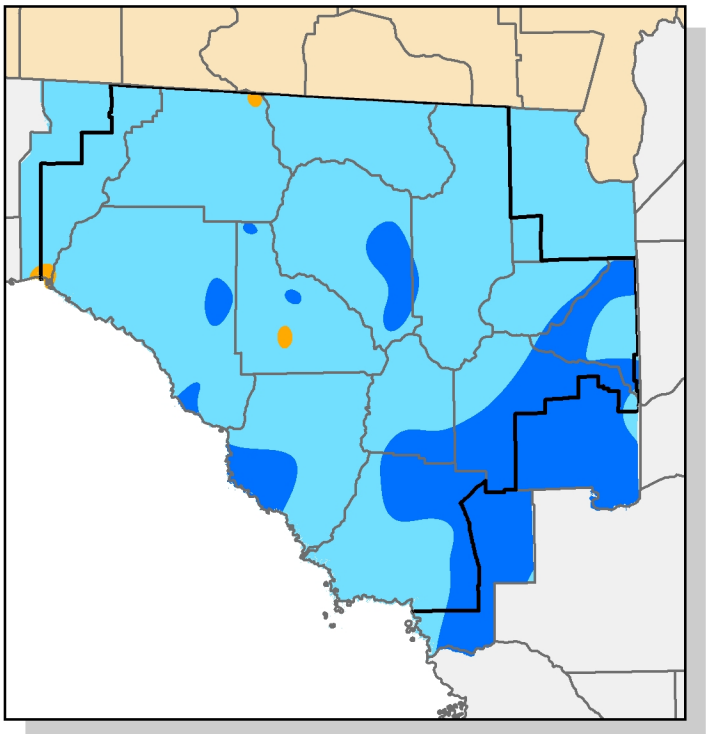


Figure 10:
December 2015
Upper Floridan Aquifer
Conditions

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



Inset: November 2015 Groundwater Levels

Figure 11: Monthly Groundwater Level Statistics
Levels January 1 through December 31, 2015
Period of Record Beginning 1978

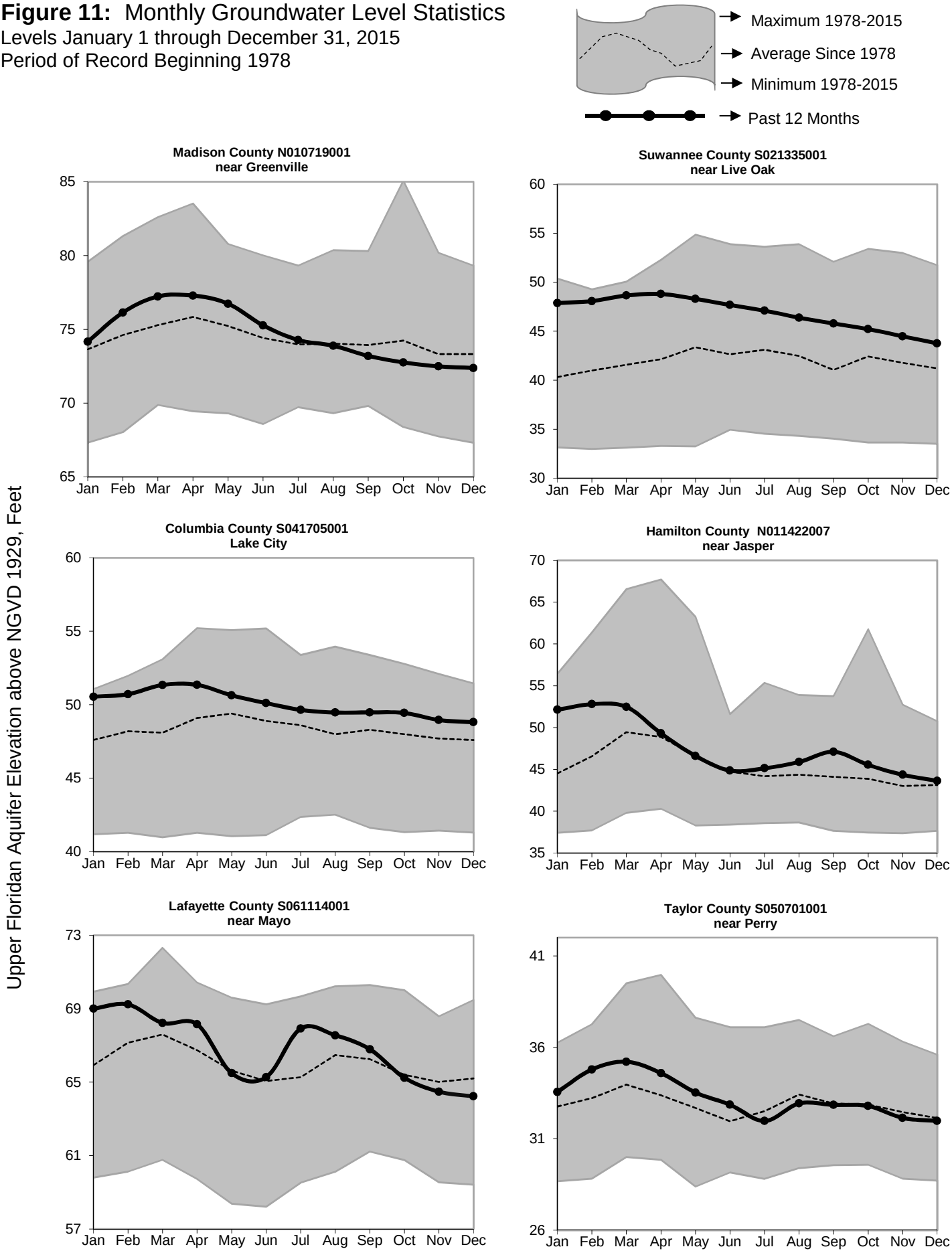
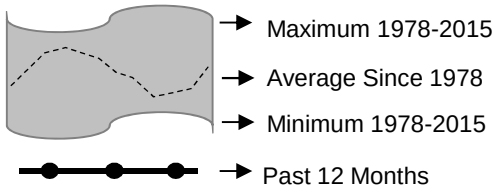
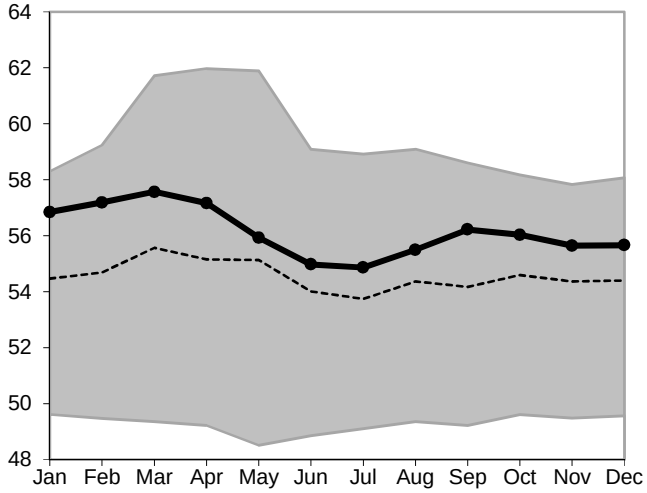


Figure 11, cont.: Groundwater Level Statistics
Levels January 1 through December 31, 2015
Period of Record Beginning 1978

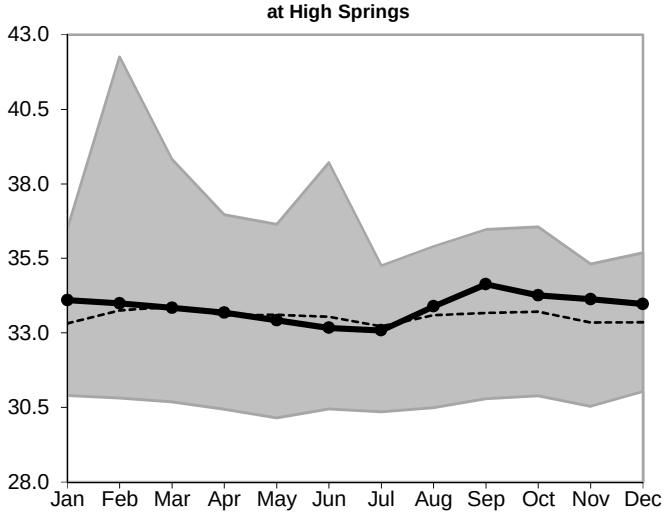


Upper Floridan Aquifer Elevation above NGVD 1929, Feet

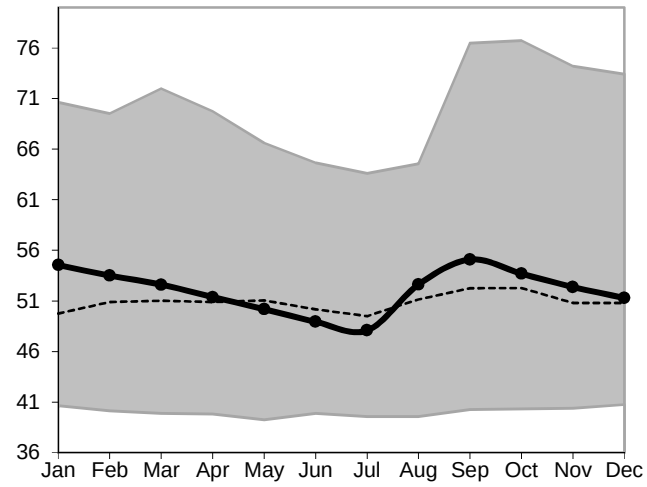
Union County S051933001
near Lake Butler



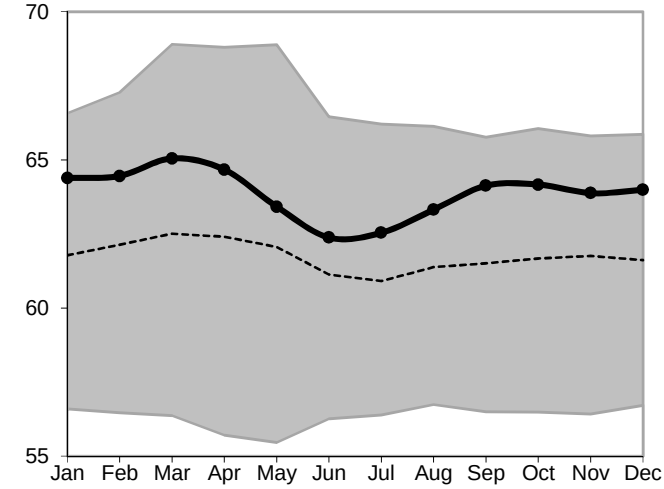
Alachua County S081703001
at High Springs



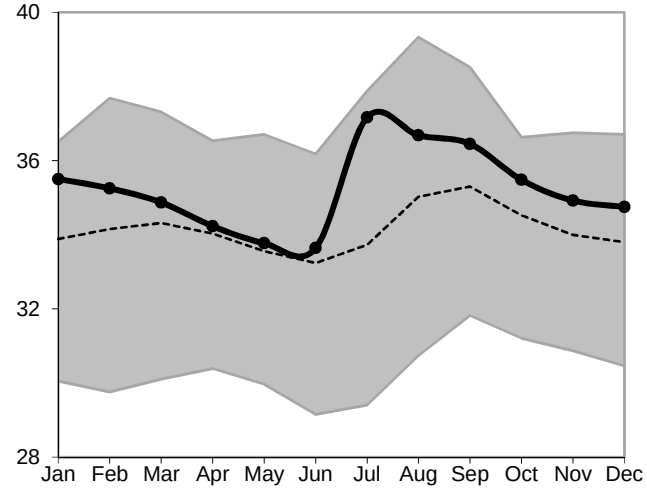
Gilchrist County S091607001
near Trenton



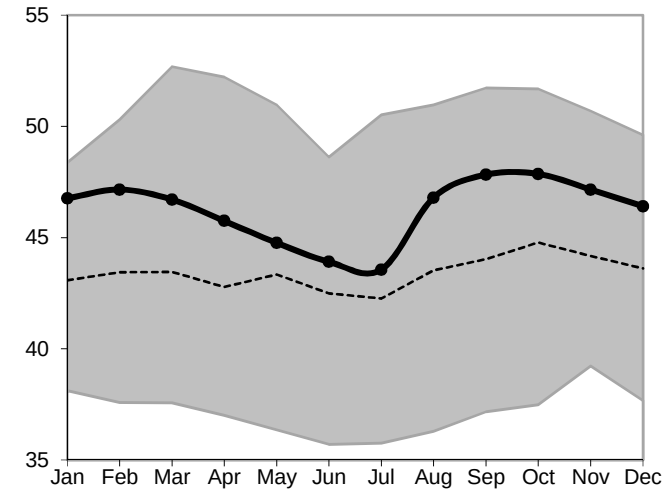
Bradford County S072132001
near Graham



Dixie County S101210001
at Cross City



Levy County S131736001
near Bronson



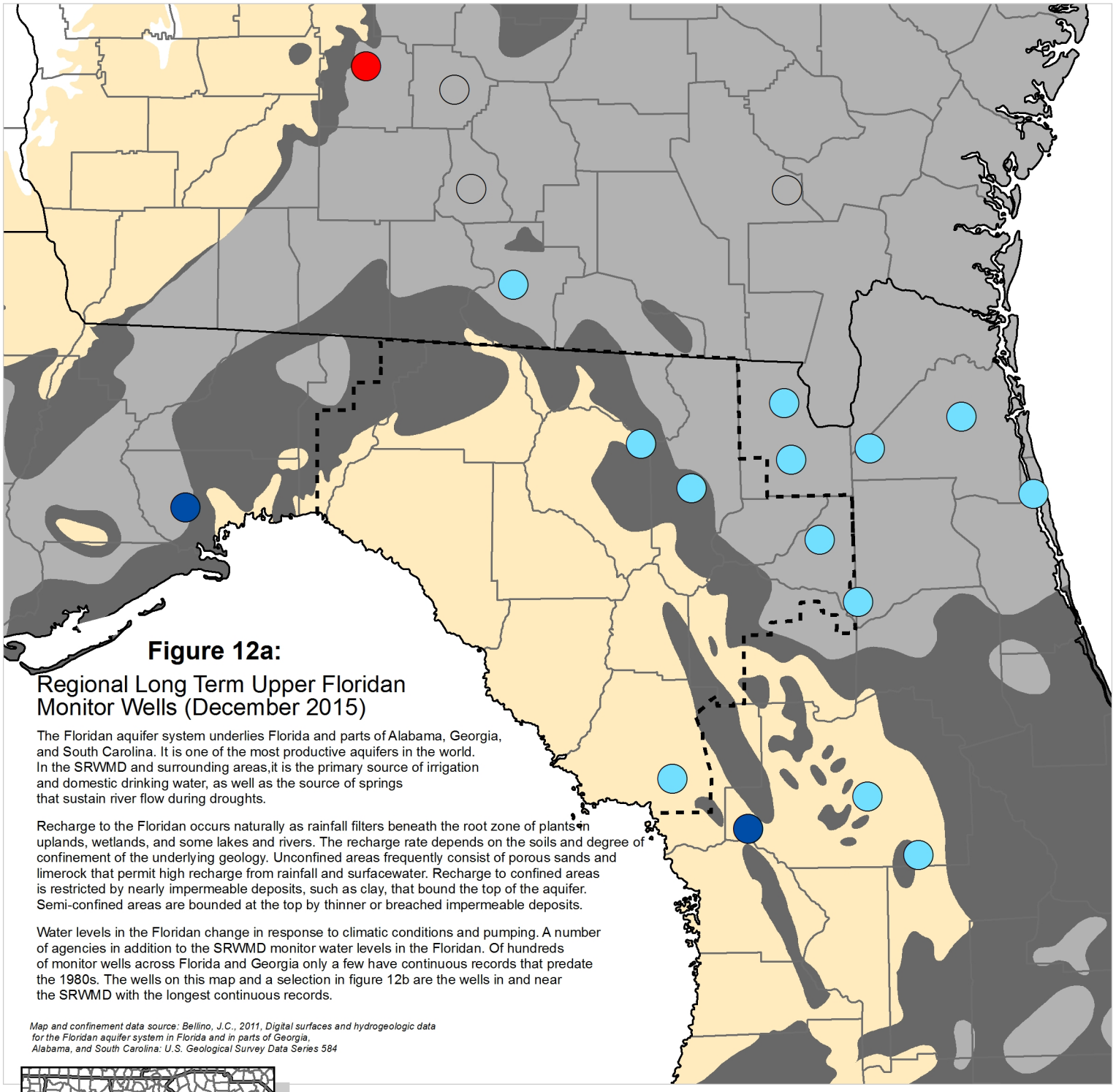


Figure 12a:

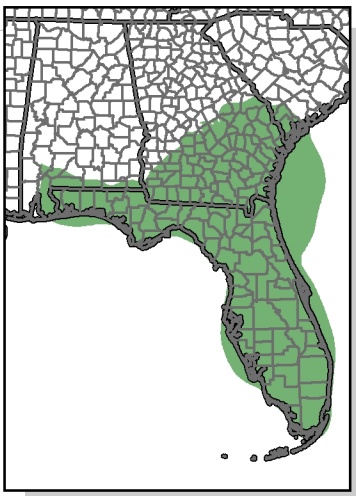
Regional Long Term Upper Floridan Monitor Wells (December 2015)

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 springs that sustain river flow during droughts.

Recharge to the Floridan occurs naturally as rainfall filters beneath the root zone of plants in uplands, wetlands, and some lakes and rivers. The recharge rate depends on the soils and degree of confinement of the underlying geology. Unconfined areas frequently consist of porous sands and limerock that permit high recharge from rainfall and surfacewater. Recharge to confined areas is restricted by nearly impermeable deposits, such as clay, that bound the top of the aquifer. Semi-confined areas are bounded at the top by thinner or breached impermeable deposits.

Water levels in the Floridan change in response to climatic conditions and pumping. A number of agencies in addition to the SRWMD monitor water levels in the Floridan. Of hundreds of monitor wells across Florida and Georgia only a few have continuous records that predate the 1980s. The wells on this map and a selection in figure 12b are the wells in and near the SRWMD with the longest continuous records.

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



Inset: Extent of Floridan Aquifer

Occurence of Confined and Unconfined Conditions in the Upper Floridan Aquifer

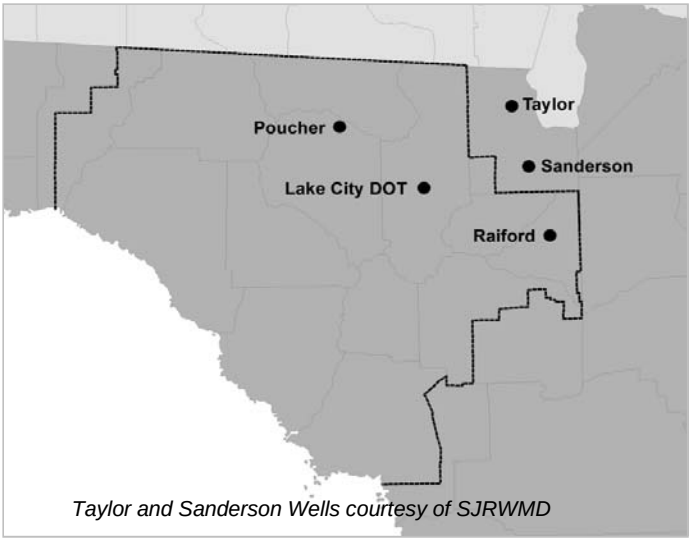
- Confined: Upper confining unit is generally greater than 100 feet thick and unbreached. Recharge is low.
- Semi-confined: Upper confining unit is generally less than 100 feet thick, breached, or both. Recharge is moderate.
- Unconfined: Upper confining unit is absent or very thin. Recharge is high.

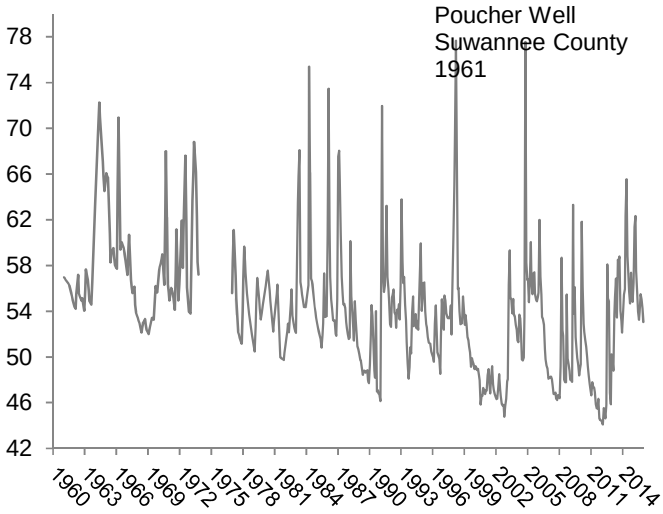
Percentile of Most Recent Water Level Relative to Entire Record

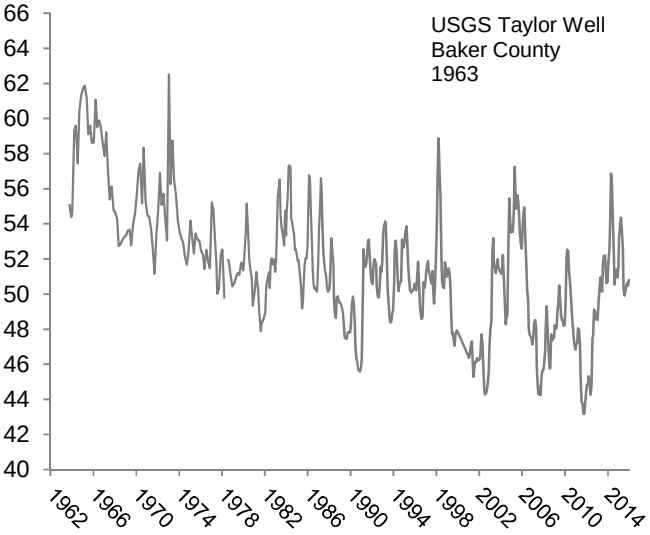
- High (Greater than 75th Percentile)
- Normal (25th to 75th Percentile)
- Low (10th to 25th Percentile)
- Extremely Low (Less than 10th Percentile)
- Not Available
- SRWMD Boundary

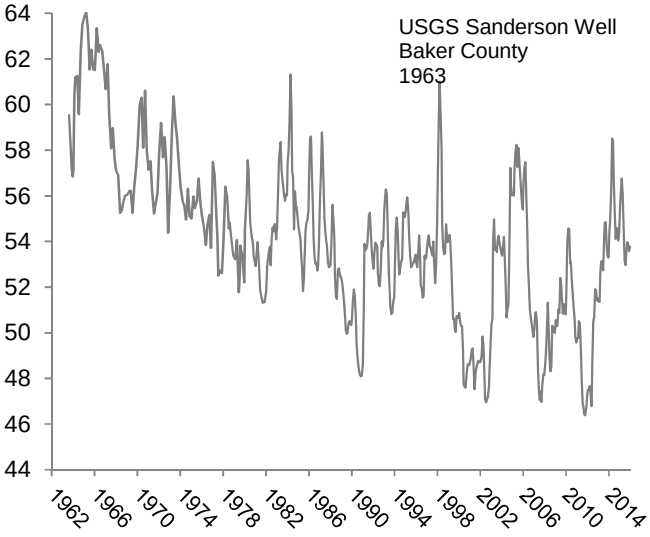
Figure 12b: Regional Long Term Upper Floridan Levels

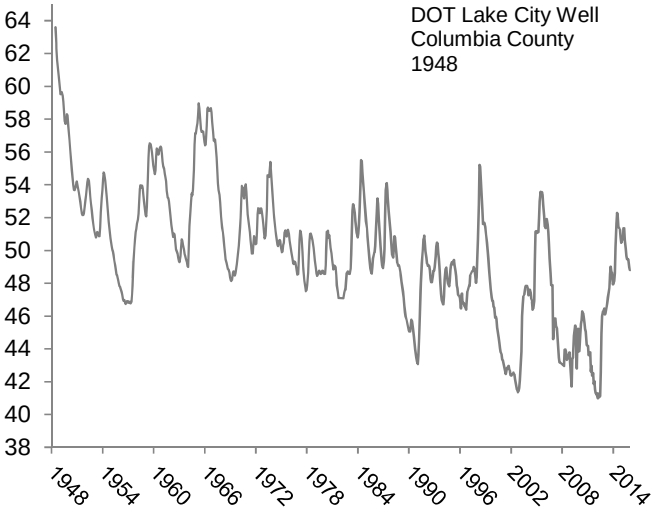
December 2015

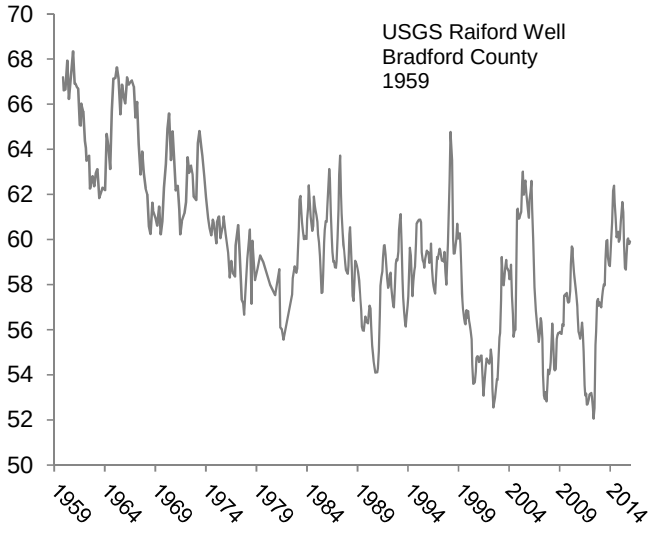












Upper Floridan Aquifer Elevation above NGVD 1929, Feet