

## **Econfina River Draft MFL Executive Summary**

The Econfina River is a black water river that begins in Madison County and flows for approximately 40 miles through Taylor County where it then discharges into the Gulf of Mexico. The river picks up tannins from decaying vegetation and acquires a black tint as it flows south. There are no major springs that feed the Econfina River as it flows through swampy lowlands.

The Econfina River was evaluated to determine flow regimes that would be protective of fish and wildlife habitats. In developing MFLs, current State Water Policy (Rule 62-40.473, Florida Administrative Code [F.A.C.]) provides that consideration be given to natural seasonal fluctuations in water flows or levels, nonconsumptive uses, and environmental water resource values (WRVs).

An essential element in establishing MFLs is identifying or developing a baseline flow record that reflects historical conditions over representative long-term hydrometeorological cycles. Any anthropogenic impacts should not be too large; it is assumed that they are present, but that they have minimally altered hydrology. The USGS gaging station, Econfina River near Perry has a long period of record (POR) that extends from February 1950 to present and is centrally located within the study area. It is the index gage for the Econfina River MFLs.

The proposed threshold for the development of the Econfina River MFL is a 15 percent change in two different metrics; a critical estuarine salinity level and out of bank flows.

Two MFLs are recommended for the Econfina River for successively higher flow regimes referenced to the index gage at Perry.

- A 23 percent reduction from the baseline flows that is protective of the salinity distributions in the lower Econfina River.
- A 8.6 percent reduction of baseline flows at river flows  $\geq 211$  cfs protective of out of bank flows.