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Hikers take on a portion of the Florida National Scenic Trail at the District's Falling Creek Track upriver from White Springs in Columbia County.

'TAKE A HIKE' ON DISTRICT LANDS FOR FEBRUARY HIKING TRAILS MONTH

LIVE OAK, FLA, Feb. 3, 2017 – The Suwannee River Water Management District (District) is encouraging area residents and visitors to 'take a hike' on District and public lands throughout the month of February in honor of Florida Hiking Trails Month proclaimed by Governor Rick Scott.

"Creating a space for the public to enjoy our water and natural resources is key to the mission of the District," said Noah Valenstein, executive director for the District. "In our area, we are proud to provide

hiking opportunities that showcase major rivers, first magnitude springs, disappearing rivers and abundant wildlife all in one hike."

Due to the numerous rivers, springs and creeks in the District, several of the trails border scenic water bodies, some of which are only accessible by foot. Many District trails are part of the Florida Scenic Trail, a 1,300-mile trail starting in Big Cypress National Preserve in south Florida and ending at Gulf Islands National Seashore in northwest Florida.

"Hiking in this area is an experience unlike anywhere else in Florida," said Norm McDonald, chairperson of the Florida Trail Association, Suwannee Chapter. "The Florida Trail Association and the District have done a tremendous job maximizing the design and location of these trails. These efforts allow hikers breathtaking views of natural North Florida and our pristine water features."

The District hosts over 70 miles of trails specifically dedicated to hiking. Numerous one- to three-mile trails make up the 70-mile stretch, which are maintained primarily through volunteers from the local chapter of the Florida Trail Association.

"February is an excellent time for outdoor recreation, specifically hiking," said Edwin McCook, land management specialist with the District. "Cool temperatures, sunny days and the lack of mosquitos make for ideal hiking weather."

For a list of trails and additional recreation opportunities on District lands, visit the www.mysuwanneeriver.com or contact Edwin McCook at 386.362.1001.

The mission of the Suwannee River Water Management District is to protect and manage water resources using science-based solutions to support natural systems and the needs of the public. The District holds true to the belief of water for nature, water for people. Headquartered in Live Oak, Florida, the District serves 15 surrounding north-central Florida counties.

For more information about the District, visit www.mysuwanneeriver.com or follow us on Facebook and Twitter, search @SRWMD.

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