

New Minimum Flow Requirements Will Help Protect the Upper Peace River

The Peace River is one of Florida's most cherished waterways. It's known for its quiet, winding beauty and the diverse wildlife that thrives along its banks. The river flows through Polk, Hardee, DeSoto and Charlotte counties and was named "Rio de la Paz," or "River of Peace," by early Spanish explorers in the 1500s, as a description of the calm, steady presence it has provided for centuries.

The river stretches more than 105 miles from the City of Bartow to Charlotte Harbor and is divided into three sections for management purposes; upper, middle and lower. To aid in the management of the river, the [Southwest Florida Water Management District \(District\)](#) is developing new minimum flows for the upper section, known as the Upper Peace River (UPR). The UPR begins just north of Bartow, where Saddle Creek meets the Peace Creek Canal and then winds south through Polk and Hardee counties before reaching Zolfo Springs.

[Minimum flows and levels \(MFLs\)](#) are established by the District to manage aquatic ecosystems and local water resources by determining the limit beyond which further withdrawals would cause significant harm. To support the development of

minimum flows for the UPR, District scientists conducted extensive research, including reviewing decades of water-level and flow records, evaluating instream and floodplain habitats, studying water quality and surveying the wildlife that depends on the river. A

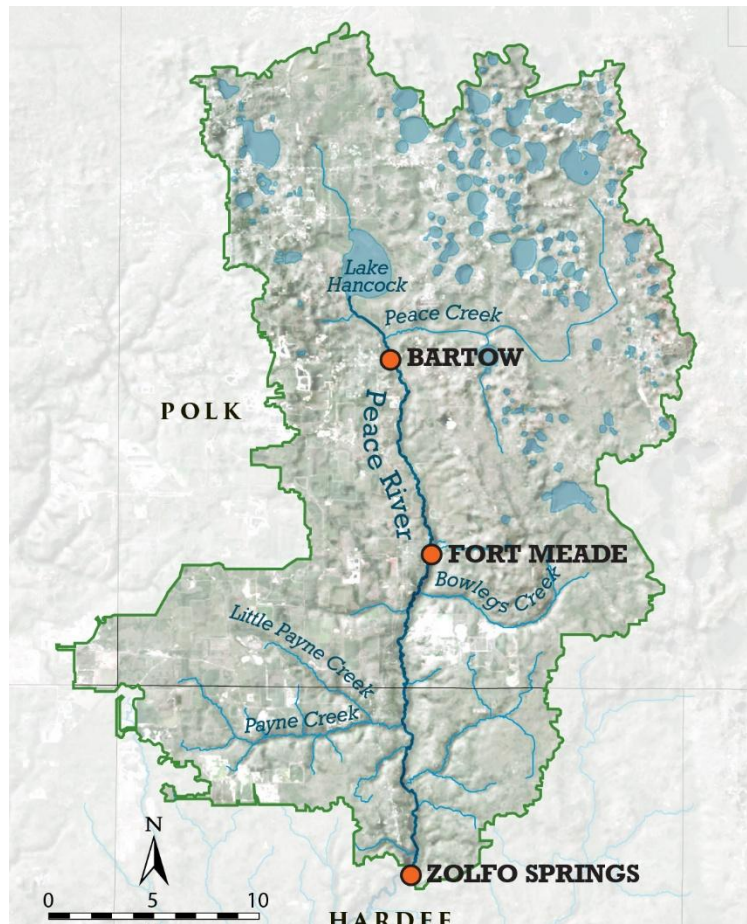


Figure 1: Upper Peace River

draft minimum flows report, along with detailed technical appendices, is available on the [District's website](#) for public review and comment.

As part of the District's commitment to transparency and sound science, the draft report underwent an independent scientific peer review. Experts from relevant fields examined the data, methods, assumptions and conclusions, and offered feedback during a series of publicly accessible virtual meetings. Peer review materials and discussions are available on the District's [web forum](#). The draft minimum flows report was updated to reflect the peer review recommendations.

Following the rigorous peer review, the District hosted a virtual public meeting June 25, 2026, to present the proposed minimum flows. Members of the public and interested parties had the opportunity to ask questions, offer input and learn how the new minimum flows will help protect the river.

The final report is scheduled to be presented to the District's Governing Board for approval at its [August 25, 2026 meeting](#). For more information about the proposed minimum flows, visit the [UPR MFL webpage](#).