

S24 Day Paddles - St Johns River Western Watershed

Etonia Creek Paddle Information Sheet

Description: Etonia Creek and Rice Creek are narrow and canopied waterways. There are a lot of native plants and animals – alligators, turtles, herons, Bald Eagle, vultures, kingfishers, snakes and hornets. The mouth of Etonia Creek is 1.5 miles north of the Crystal Cove Marina on the western shore of the St. Johns River. Etonia Creek is a main tributary in the St. Johns River and Rice Creek branches off Etonia Creek at the Georgia Pacific plant. This was once one of NE Florida’s most polluted waterways but has been restored to a healthy and enjoyable paddling trail. Highway 17/19 is a 4-lane bridge over Etonia Creek 1 mile from the mouth. Etonia is narrow and can be swift depending upon rainfall. Etonia Creek is a long tributary that flows from as far away as Florahome, some 10 miles west and flows through the Etoniah State Forest. Turnaround is at the weir.

Skill Level: Advanced

Distance/Approximate Time: 10.9 Miles/6 Hours

Launch Site: Crystal Cove Marina Ramp

Special Considerations: Possible deadfall and/or snags, especially after storms. Brushing against blow-downs should be avoided due to hornet nests. Launch fee. Do not paddle on the St Johns if windy. Recommend launching 3 hours before high tide.

Skill Level Definitions

Beginner: New to paddling and may need tips and or instructions about paddling strokes, safety procedures, and entering/exiting kayaks. Comfortable on short trips of 1 to 3 miles on protected waters, when wind does not exceed 5 mph.

Novice: Paddlers acquainted with basic paddle strokes and can manage kayak handling independently in winds not exceeding 10 mph on protected waters. Comfortable on trips up to 6 miles.

Intermediate: Paddlers with experience in basic strokes and some experience on different venues, including some open water. Comfortable on trip distances of 6 to 10 miles, winds not exceeding 15 mph.

Advanced: Seasoned paddlers who possess skills and experience to paddle all venues and conditions. Experienced in self-rescues. Should be comfortable paddling more than 10 miles in a day.

NOTE: Great care has been taken to ensure this guides accuracy, but weather, tides, and water conditions can change rapidly and create hazardous conditions. These maps are for visual reference only, please consult NOAA Charts for navigation. Paddlers should have all proper safety equipment and check conditions before departure. All paddlers should always wear PFDs while on the water, and leave a float plan. There are inherent dangers in any paddle sport. There are special hazards along the Florida coast due to shifting tides, changing wind and weather, shallow waters, and treacherous bottoms with soft mud, rocks, and oyster bars. It is up to each paddler to be aware of these dangers, to accept and be prepared for the risks involved, and to be certain they have the skills to safely paddle in these conditions.