

# Southeast Coast Inventory and Monitoring Network

# October 2025

Internal Newsletter of the SECN

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SECN Physical Scientist Stephen Cooper checks dominant sediment type as Hydrologic Technician Katie Dagastino records the data. Park intern Tripp Sponseller holds the measuring the tape. NPS / Eric Starkey

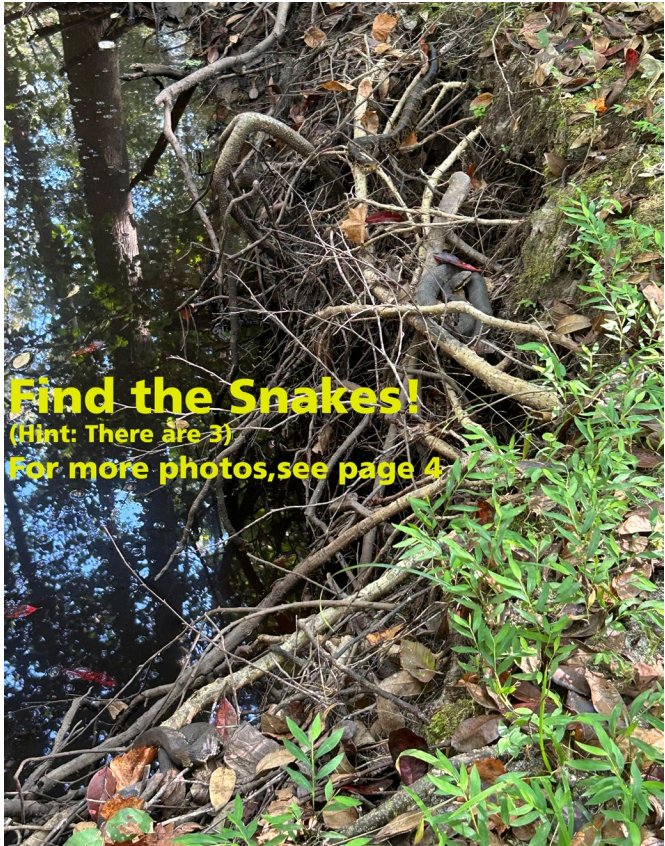
## Streaming at Congaree

### SECN Conducted Wadeable Stream Habitat Surveys at Two Sites on Cedar Creek

Physical Scientist Stephen Cooper, Aquatic Ecologist Eric Starkey, and Hydrologic Technician Katie Dagastino conducted wadeable stream habitat surveys at two sites on Cedar Creek in Congaree National Park last month. Assisted by park interns, Nathan Pierce and Tripp Sponseller, data collected included bank heights, stream depths and widths, and streambed characteristics. Detailed transects were surveyed using a total station. This was the third round of surveys at Congaree NP. One site, also on Cedar Creek, will be surveyed later this month.



Above, Cedar Creek. Right, exposed roots and *Agkistrodon piscivorus* along ephemeral McKenzie Creek. NPS / Eric Starkey



# SECN Supports Parks Beyond Monitoring



## Fire Impact Survey at CUIS

In August, Botanist Forbes Boyle and Biological Technician Mallorie Davis, along with Cumberland Island NS Resource Management staff, surveyed impacts to the area burned during the Ashley Fire on Cumberland Island NS. The fire started in late July and burned over 12 acres of maritime forest on the eastern edge of the Table Point peninsula. According to vegetation type polygons developed during the previous vegetation mapping project on the park, the fire appeared to occur within a seepage swamp forest type. These wetland forests are rare across Cumberland Island. SECN staff were used to ground-truth the vegetation type post-burn to determine if the fire actually did burn within this forest type and assess any tree or ground cover impacts. Although Forbes and Mallorie did find a narrow forested wetland on the southern edge of the burned area, the majority of the fire footprint occurred within typical hardwood- and pine-dominated maritime upland forest. The reconnaissance team also discovered the probable ignition source during their survey. Left, lightning struck pine tree. NPS / SECN



## Surveying Stream Issues at CARL

The SECN Physical Scientist Stephen Cooper and Aquatic Ecologist Eric Starkey provided technical assistance to Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site by assessing stream channels and areas affected by Hurricane Helene. They delivered feedback and management recommendations directly to park staff and regional recovery team. Left, the team, including Carol Fields and Chelesi White, CARL staff, and Stephen and Eric, cross a stone bridge. NPS / SECN



## Scouting Inventory Opportunities at TIMU

In September, Botanist Forbes Boyle and Timucuan EHP Chief of Science and Resource Management Steve Kidd scouted newly acquired park property to identify unique areas for targeted plant inventories. They were joined by University of North Florida Biology Professor Scott Jones, whose 2025 Field Botany students are doing plant inventories throughout northeastern Florida this fall as part of their course requirements. Park property on Black Hammock Island in Duval County Florida was determined to be high-priority for park resource management, as this site contains high-quality freshwater wetlands and a large extent maritime hardwood hammock forest both with the potential to uncover new species not found elsewhere across the park. SECN vegetation data collected from nearby monitoring plots were used to assess the unique vegetation located in this new park property (left) and aid in its selection as a focal area for this biotic inventory project.



## Dragonfly Mercury Project at CUIS

The Dragonfly Mercury Project (DMP) is a NPS/USGS managed, nationwide study that is primarily conducted by citizen scientists and volunteers throughout the national parks and other properties. Dragonfly larvae were collected from three different sites on Cumberland Island on September 8th and September 11th by Patrick Helm (Wild Pig Biotech at CUIS), Jordan Williams (SIP intern, Wilderness Assistant), Michael Seibert (Chief of Resources), and Mallorie Davis (SECN Vegetation Biotech); Isabella Pellegrino (Sea Turtle Technician) joined for the last site of sampling as well. The sampling sites included Whitney Lake, Sweetwater Lake at Duck House Trail, and Retta Lake. These samples are packaged and will be sent to the lab for analysis of mercury content. Data can be found on the Dashboard: The Dragonfly Mercury Project Data Dashboard by searching Cumberland Island National Seashore (or any location of interest). Above left, Mallorie, Jordan, and Isabella work on data reports. Above right, Patrick and Jordan look for specimens.

# Goodbye Megan

## Former SIP Intern Assisted the SECN Veg Team

Megan Herrmann recently completed her internship with the Southeast Coast Network, assisting with vegetation surveys at Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park and Moore’s Creek National Battlefield. Megan also created tree maps in ArcGIS Pro to support upcoming monitoring. At Congaree National Park, she helped develop vegetation monitoring protocols, mapped data for *Macbridea caroliniana*, and contributed to fuels and habitat management projects.

Megan said her favorite part was “traveling to a variety of parks across the Southeast, which gave me the opportunity to study the region’s unique and diverse flora working directly in the field.” Megan said she will carry forward stronger technical skills in vegetation monitoring and data management, “as well as a deeper understanding of how long-term ecological data contributes to informed conservation planning and decision-making.”

She recently joined the Plant Ecology Lab at the Jones Center at Ichauway as a Research Technician II. Current projects include a long-term ecological monitoring project examining the effects of fire exclusion and reintroduction to longleaf pine savannah ecosystems, seed collections for Seeds of Success and the Florida Natural Areas programs, and studies of seed dispersal.

Best wishes for the future Megan!



Above, Megan with SECN Biological Technician Mallorie Davis, at Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park. Below, Megan talks with SECN Botanist Forbes Boyle at Moores Creek National Battlefield. NPS photos / Mallorie Davis



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## More Monitoring Updates:

### Water Quality

Fixed-station data was collected the last week of September at Fort Pulaski National Monument, Cumberland Island National Seashore, Canaveral National Seashore, Fort Matanzas National Monument, Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve. Park staff are assisting with Cape Hatteras and Cape Lookout National Seashores. Another round of visits will take place in October, including Congaree National Park.

### Coastal Elevation and Shoreline Change

Shoreline surveys will be conducted this fall at Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Cape Lookout National Seashore, Fort Matanzas National Monument and Canaveral National Seashore. Surface Elevation Tables (SETs) will be read at those parks and Fort Pulaski National Monument, Fort Frederica National Monument, Cumberland Island National Seashore and Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve.

### Landbirds and Anurans

Automated recording devices were retrieved from Fort Frederica NM and Congaree National Park is scheduled for October. The ARDs at Moores Creek National Battlefield, Canaveral National Seashore, Fort Frederica National Monument and Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park have been collected.



Park vounteer Denise Hagan led a mangrove titled, “Mangroves in Motion: Ripple Effects and Underwater Secrets,” at Fort Matanzas National Monument recently. SECN Coastal Ecologist William Ches Vervaeke provided facts and information for three species of mangroves in the park.

### Terrestrial Vegetation

Monitoring for 2025 was completed in August with the remaining plots surveyed at Moores Creek National Battlefield. Other parks included Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park and Congaree National Park.

# Steering Committee Meeting is November 20

The FY26 Steering Committee and Board Meeting is November 20 and will be held virtually. A meeting agenda will be sent in the coming weeks along with network's FY25 accomplishments and FY26 workplan. We hope you can attend this year. It is a great opportunity for parks to weigh in and provide feedback on our program. For more information and to RSVP, contact SECN Acting Program Manager Forbes Boyle at maxwell\_boyle@nps.gov.

## Scenes from Congaree



Stephen Cooper takes a bank measurement with the help of Nathan Pierce. NPS / Katie Dagastino



Nathan Pierce places a flag on the bank at one of the transects. Tripp Sponseller holds the measuring tape to establish the distance from the previous transect. All under the watchful eye of Eric Starkey, NPS / Katie Dagastino.



Eric Starkey collects points on one of the detailed transects using a total station. NPS / Katie Dagastino



Stephen Cooper shows a freshwater mussel he found in the stream. NPS / Katie Dagastino.

**For More About the SECN:** <https://www.nps.gov/im/secn/index.htm>