



The source of the Wakulla River is Wakulla Springs. Because of the karst topography, the eastern part of Wakulla is filled with freshwater springs, and circular groundwater fed ponds and sinkholes. Early inhabitants dubbed the springs, "strange and mysterious waters," an accurate name because in some locations spring waters appears somewhat magically from the ground, runs downstream for several yards, and disappears mysteriously below the surface once again. Of the many beautiful clear water springs in the region, the most famous is Wakulla Springs.

Wakulla Springs is one of the largest and deepest freshwater springs in the world. The Spring flows up and out from an underground river at a rate of over 400,000 gallons per minute. Even at its deepest point of 185 feet, objects are sometimes visible near the bottom. As the spring water flows over land it forms the equally clear Wakulla River.

An interesting story in Wakulla's history is that of Edward Ball. Mr. Ball owned a large tract of land around Wakulla Springs nearly fifty years ago. A fence was put around Wakulla Springs to keep boaters out of the Springs area. There was much public protest, and Mr. Ball was taken to court under the claim that he couldn't fence off a navigable waterway. Mr. Ball won. The fence is still in place today, providing important protection for wildlife along the river.

Historically, Wakulla Springs has always been a special place. Scientific interest in the spring began in 1850, when Sarah Smith reported seeing the bones of an ancient mastodon on the bottom. Since that time, scientists have identified the remains of at least nine other extinct Ice Age mammals, deposited as far as 1,200 feet back into the underwater cave system that branches from the Spring.

Over the years, several cave diving expeditions have explored the caves of Wakulla Springs. Because of the great depth and clarity of the Spring's caves, significant advances in diving research, technology and safety have been made here. In 1989, a professional cave diving

expedition into the underwater caverns was filmed for a National Geographic television special. Project dive teams have traveled over a mile into one of the underwater caves. In 1994, a professional dive team explored the spring cavern to a depth exceeding 300 feet and a distance of 4,300 feet. They found the cavern branches into four conduits, but the source of the spring still remains a mystery.

Several of the early Tarzan movies starring Johnny Weissmuller, as well as the Creature from the Black Lagoon, Airport 77 and Joe Panther were filmed on location at Wakulla Springs.

Another spring of distinction in Wakulla County is Spring Creek Spring located on the coast of the community of Spring Creek. Spring Creek Spring has the largest average discharge of spring water in the state, discharging 1.3 billion gallons of fresh water a day. Spring Creek Spring is known as a submarine spring, because it erupts below sea level.