



# Levy Bay Loop Paddling Trail



## Overview:

Begin and end at the Levy Bay Boat Ramp. Follow the shoreline northward to the end of Dickerson Bay. Continue around the shore, following St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge property back into Levy Bay and boat ramp.

## Considerations:

This trip is in sheltered, shallow water. It is best enjoyed on a high tide.

## Focus:

Exploring Levy and Dickerson Bay adjacent to the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. Birding is excellent, especially in spring and fall.

## Distance:

4.5 miles/ 2-3 hours.

## Put In/ Take Out

Take US 98 south through Panacea. Turn right (east) onto Chattahoochee and left on Levy Bay Road. The boat ramp is at the end of the road, with restroom, trash cans, benches, and parking. Launch on sand next to asphalt ramp.

## Expertise:

Beginner and up.



Paddling Trail information at [VisitWakulla.com](http://VisitWakulla.com).

### Commercial Fishing

By the first half of the 20th century, most Apalachee Bay fishermen had a model bow skiff. Built of 16-foot old-growth cypress lumber, these vessels became the standard for commercial fishermen. People rowed, poled, sailed, and paddled them through creeks, bayous, and coastal waters where they caught mullet and other fish with seine nets.

In 1993, an amendment to Florida's constitution imposed restrictions on commercial net fishing in state waters and, for many fishing families, this ended their traditional way of life. Some turned to using smaller mesh or cast nets, while others shifted to crabbing or clam farming. Lawsuits filed by fishermen relating to the amendment are still in Florida courts.

### Panacea Mineral Springs

Imagine sinking into a smelly pool of mineral water to alleviate your pains. Panacea has several mineral springs and local health spas attracted the ailing from far away. They listened to piano playing at night, the sound most often drowned out by loud insects. Travelers arrived from the Sopchoppy train station in the late 1890s in buggies and mule-drawn carts over

### Panacea

In 1895, W.C. Tully founded Panacea, named for the healing properties of its mineral springs, estimated to number up to 20. He built the 125-room Panacea Mineral Springs Hotel. It burned in the 1920s. Another large hotel was the Bay View Inn on Dickerson Bay. This was torn down in the 1950s. A long-time commercial fishing village and a designated



Waterfronts Florida community, Panacea is steeped in 20th-century maritime history, from the days of catching huge runs of Mullet by hand-drawn seine nets to later oystering, shrimping, and crabbing. Panacea prospered during World War II thanks to U.S. Army Camp Gordon Johnston located on St. James Island in neighboring Franklin County. Panacea has antique shops, a grocery store, gas stations, post office, lodging, seafood restaurants, a marina, marine supplies, fishing guides, RV camping, and several retail seafood houses offering fresh Grouper, Shrimp, Oysters, and other delicacies.

plank roads to "take the waters." Some referred to the springs as "Medicine Springs."

### Shrimping

By the 1920s, shrimpers had shifted operations from Fernandina Beach to the Big Bend. Packing companies shipped canned shrimp to Boston and other markets and sold fresh shrimp locally. Shrimp trawlers still ply this area of the Gulf, supporting 4,400 jobs and contributing \$185 million to the state's economy. However, the industry has been impacted in recent years by the importation of less expensive farmed shrimp.

