

Boating Guide to the
EDISTO RIVER BASIN
of South Carolina

What can you find in this book?

- Detailed maps for navigating over 270 miles of the Edisto River system, and a map of the coastal Edisto Basin.
- 44 access points with descriptions and directions.
- Geologic, ecological and cultural points of interest viewable from your boat.
- Overview of the Edisto Basin's natural and cultural history.
- Locations of parks, preserves, and wildlife lands along the waterways.
- River safety and stewardship information.

The Edisto River Basin

The Edisto River Basin is a rich landscape which has attracted and supported people for at least ten thousand years. Residents and visitors alike continue to enjoy the natural and cultural landscape, and rural lifestyles of the Edisto Basin.

Boating is one of best ways to experience the Edisto River Basin. This guidebook provides maps and information to help you explore this landscape in a canoe, kayak or other watercraft.

The Edisto River rises from South Carolina's fall line, where the rolling hills of the Piedmont and the Midlands give way to the sandy flatlands of the Coastal Plain. Two forks, the North and the South, flow through the upper coastal plain and converge into the main stem Edisto River, which continues to the Atlantic Ocean. The approximately 310 unobstructed river miles from the forks' headwaters through the Low Country to the ocean have distinguished the Edisto as **one of the longest free-flowing blackwater rivers in the United States.**



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River Safety

All river users should be aware of safety concerns and potential hazards. Proper planning and preparedness can ensure a safe and successful river trip. Review these basic river safety tips.

Plan and Prepare

- Review the maps and have a plan.
- Know where your trip will take you and know where you can exit the river in case of emergency.
- Check river conditions. High or low water can drastically change the nature of the trip, the amount of time it takes to complete, and the hazards that are encountered.
- Check the weather and plan accordingly.
- Plan realistically for the members of your group.
- Allow enough time to complete your trip within daylight hours.
- Carry enough water and food to complete your trip.

Safety Tips

- Always wear a Life Jacket!
- Be aware of natural hazards, such as downed trees, swift currents, venomous snakes, poisonous plants, etc.
- Plan to get wet, pack clothing accordingly.
- River users should be competent swimmers.
- Carry a first-aid kit, a noise-making device (whistle) and a flashlight, in case of emergency.
- Never go boating alone.



Prepare a Float Plan before departure, and leave it with someone who can help in case of an emergency. See a Float Plan example from the SCDNR: www.dnr.sc.gov/boating/forms/pdf/DNRfloatplan.pdf

River Stewardship

The Edisto River Basin is one of the most scenic blackwater river landscapes in the country. Please take care to ensure that it stays this way for future visitors.

Leave No Trace Seven Principles

1. Plan ahead and Prepare
2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
3. Dispose of Waste Properly
4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

© 1999 by the *Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics*: www.LNT.org.

Pack it in, pack it out! If you can, pack out any litter you encounter, even if it's not yours. Leave the place better than you found it.

Build campfires only when necessary. After a fire, disperse all ashes and remove any sign of the fire. **ALWAYS COMPLETELY EXTINGUISH A CAMPFIRE** before going to sleep or leaving the site.

Respect private property. Within stream channels, the sandbars and shoreline below the ordinary high water line are usually public, but most of the land above this mark is privately owned. Only enter these lands with permission. Publicly accessible properties are shown in this guide.












Interested in helping keep our waterways clean? Volunteer for a Beach Sweep or River Sweep. www.dnr.sc.gov/bsrs



The Edisto River Basin OVERVIEW MAP



MAP LEGEND

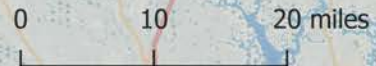
-  **River Mile** Latitude
Longitude
-  **Boat Ramp**
-  **Canoe Launch**
-  **Parks, Preserves, and Wildlife Areas**
-  Interstate Highway
-  US Highway
-  SC Highway
-  Local Road
-  Railroad
-  Transmission Line
-  Pipe Line

Points of Interest

-  Historical/Cultural
 -  Geologic
 -  Natural
- Descriptions can be found at the end of each interpretive section of the guidebook.

The maps are divided into three color-coded series, and a map of the coastal Edisto Basin. Look for these icons on the bottom of each page to quickly flip to the correct maps.

- North Fork 
- South Fork 
- Edisto River 



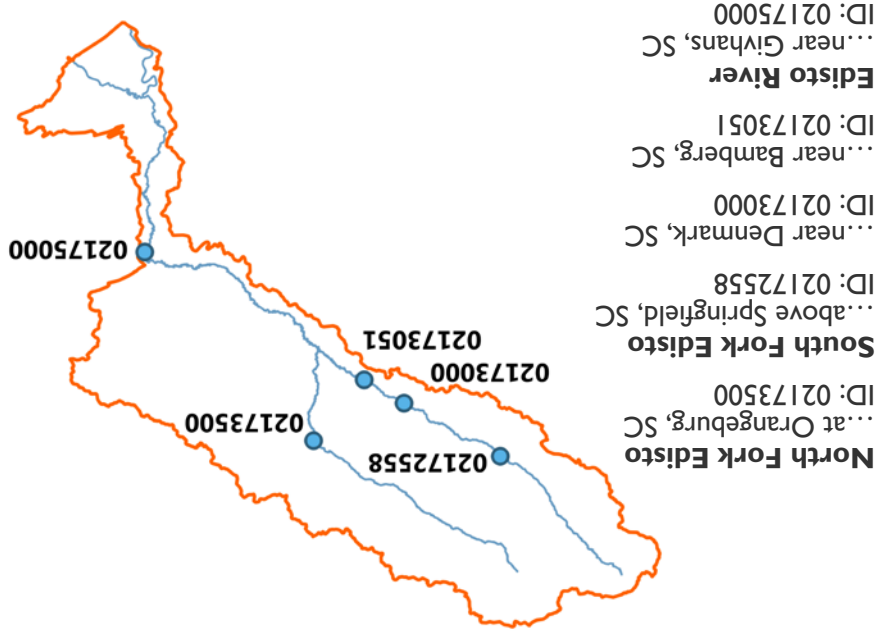
ATLANTIC OCEAN

Streamflow Information

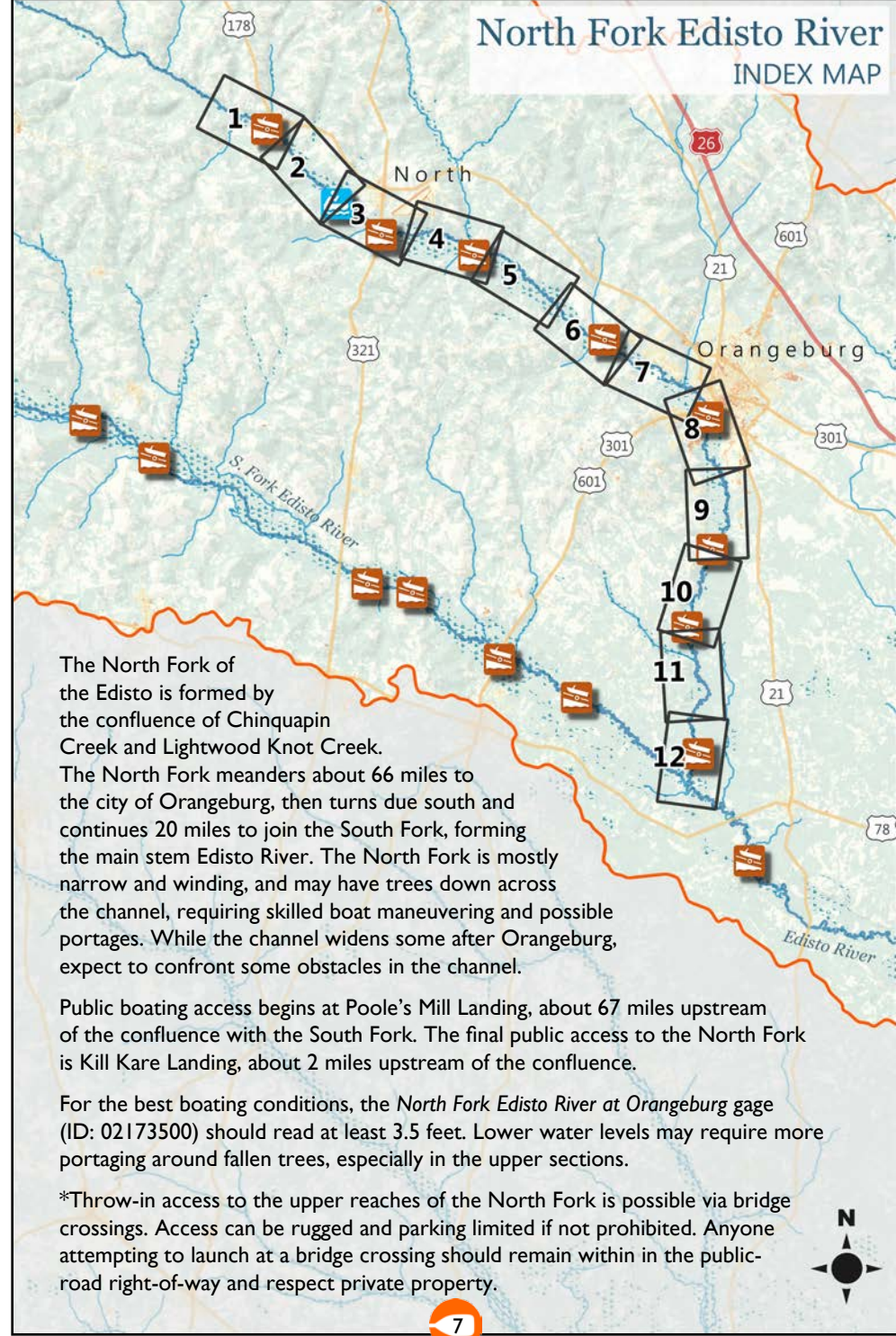
The boating conditions in the Edisto Basin can vary dramatically depending on streamflow. At low water levels, more portaging around fallen trees is likely to be required. At high water, the river currents can be swift, and navigating the channels can be difficult and hazardous. Areas of multiple channels and swamps require special attention at high water. Generally, water levels will be higher during the late winter and spring, and lower in the summer and fall.

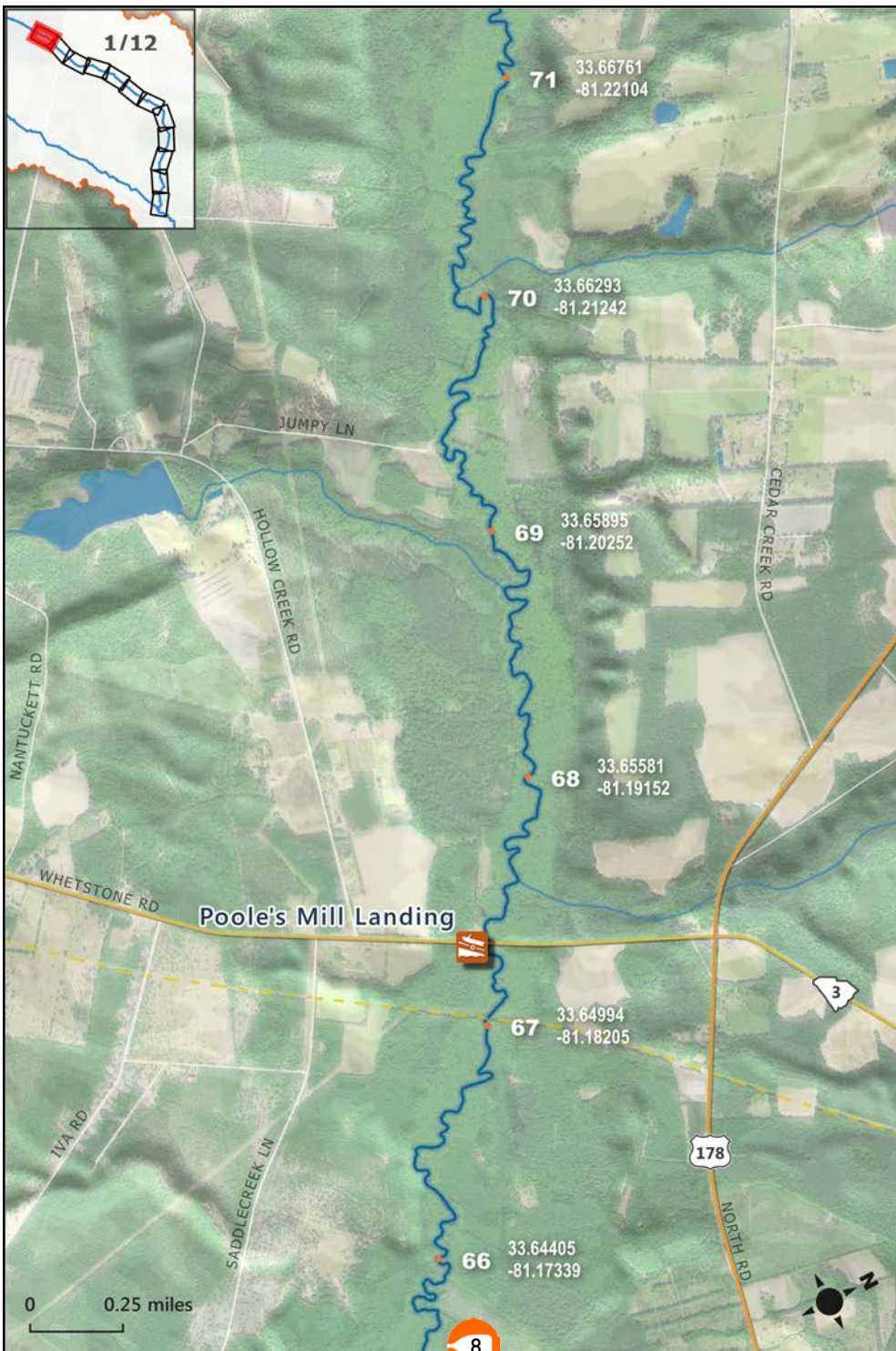
Boating conditions can vary greatly across locations due to changing river widths, downed trees across the channel, and whether the section is maintained for boating. **The introduction of each map section has general river conditions and flow information for that section.**

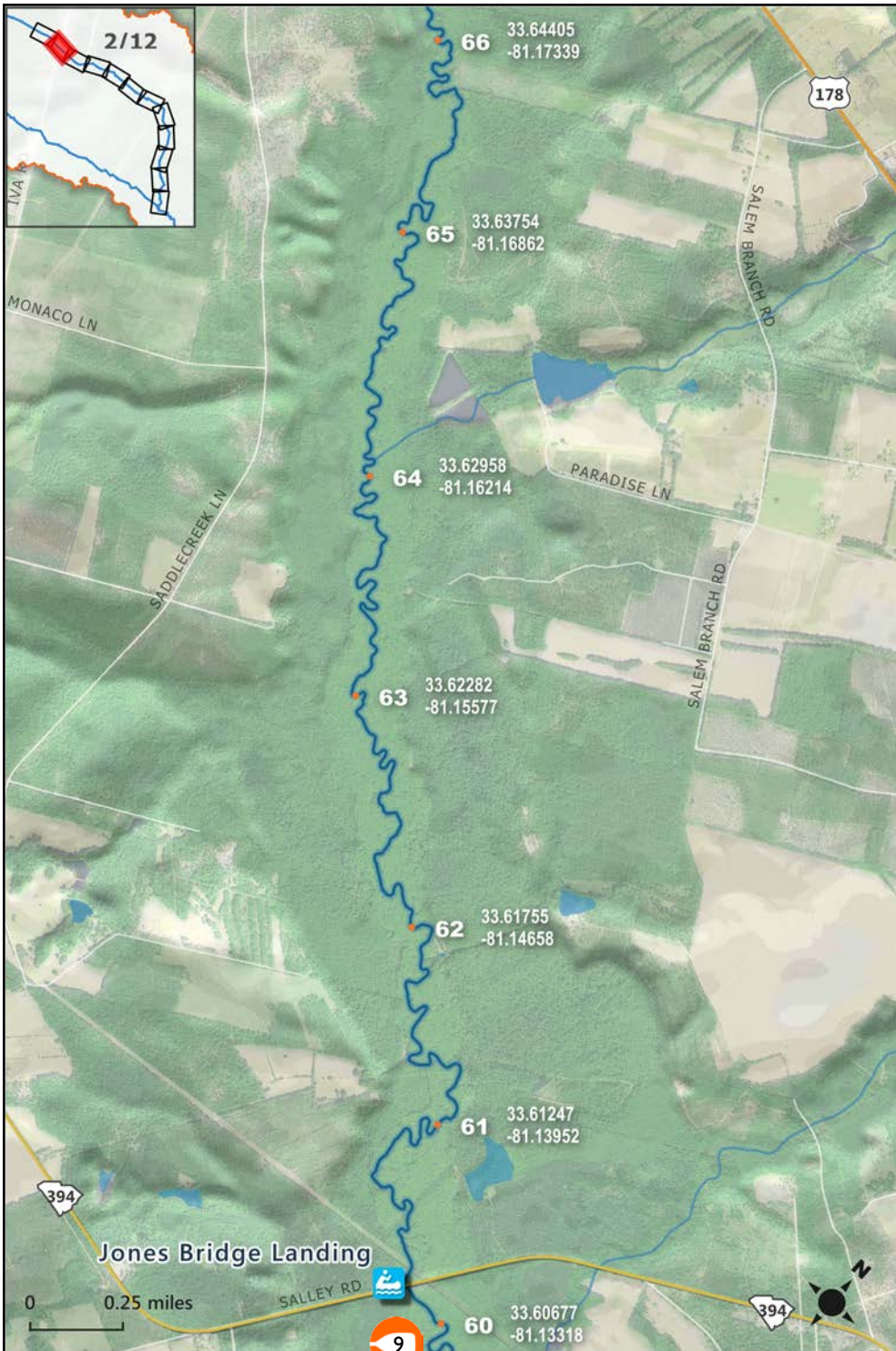
The following list of USGS stream gages in the Edisto Basin should be referenced for current flow information before boating. Visit the **USGS National Water Information System** website to find current and historical streamflow data for the gages listed.

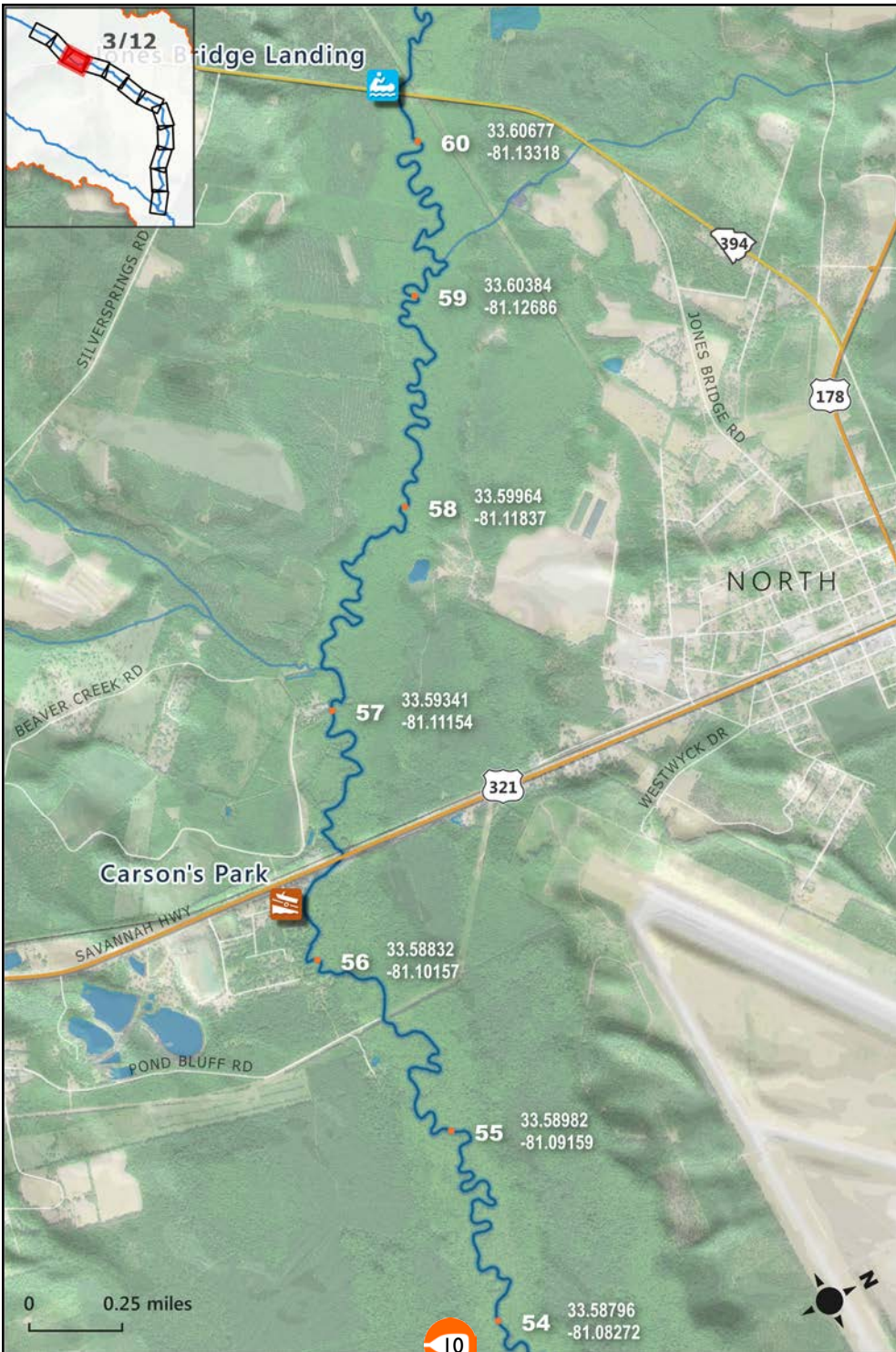


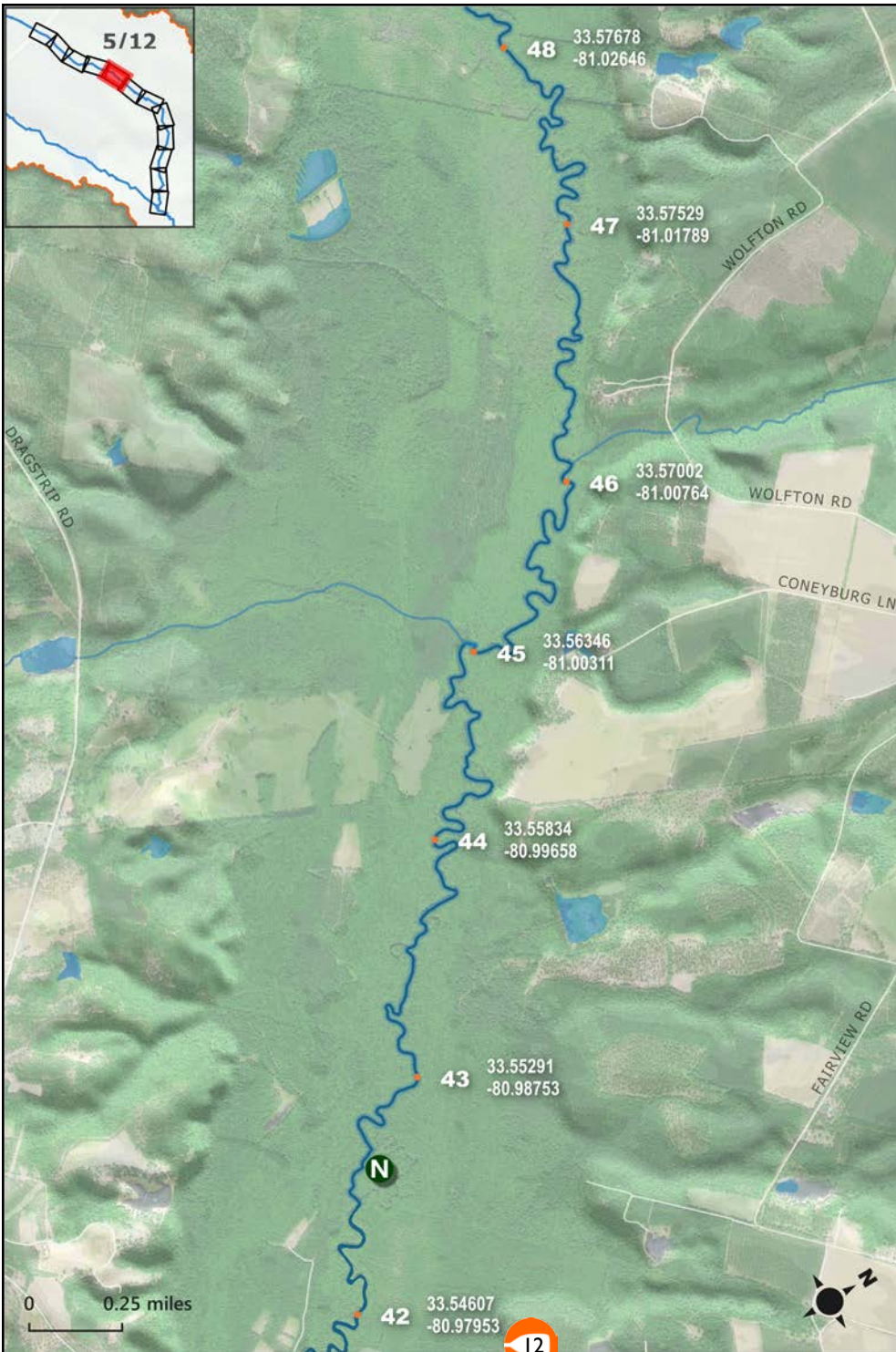
The Edisto River begins to experience tidal influence just upstream of the U.S. 17 crossing. See the **NOAA Tides and Currents** website for tide predictions to help plan your coastal boating.





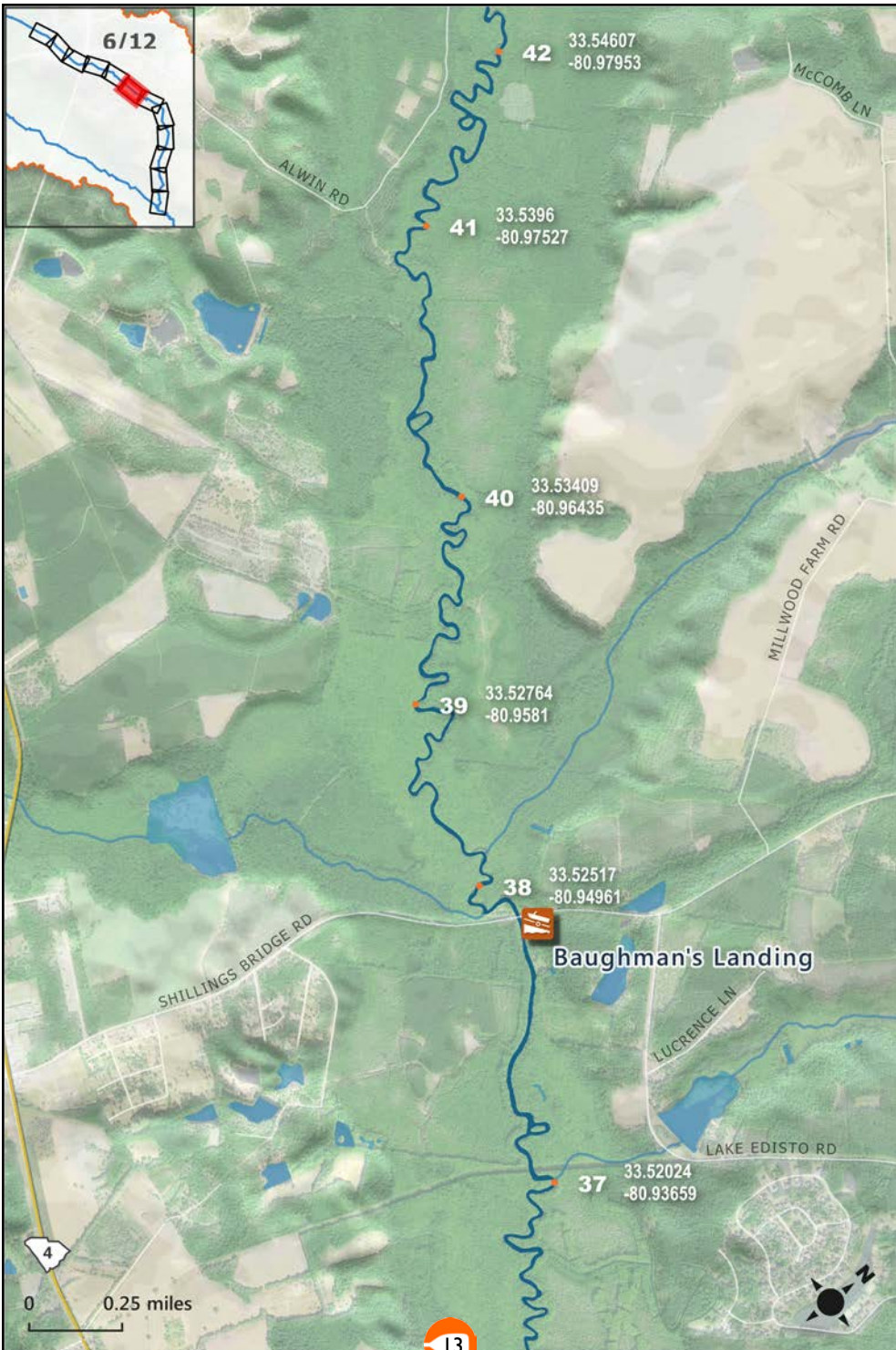


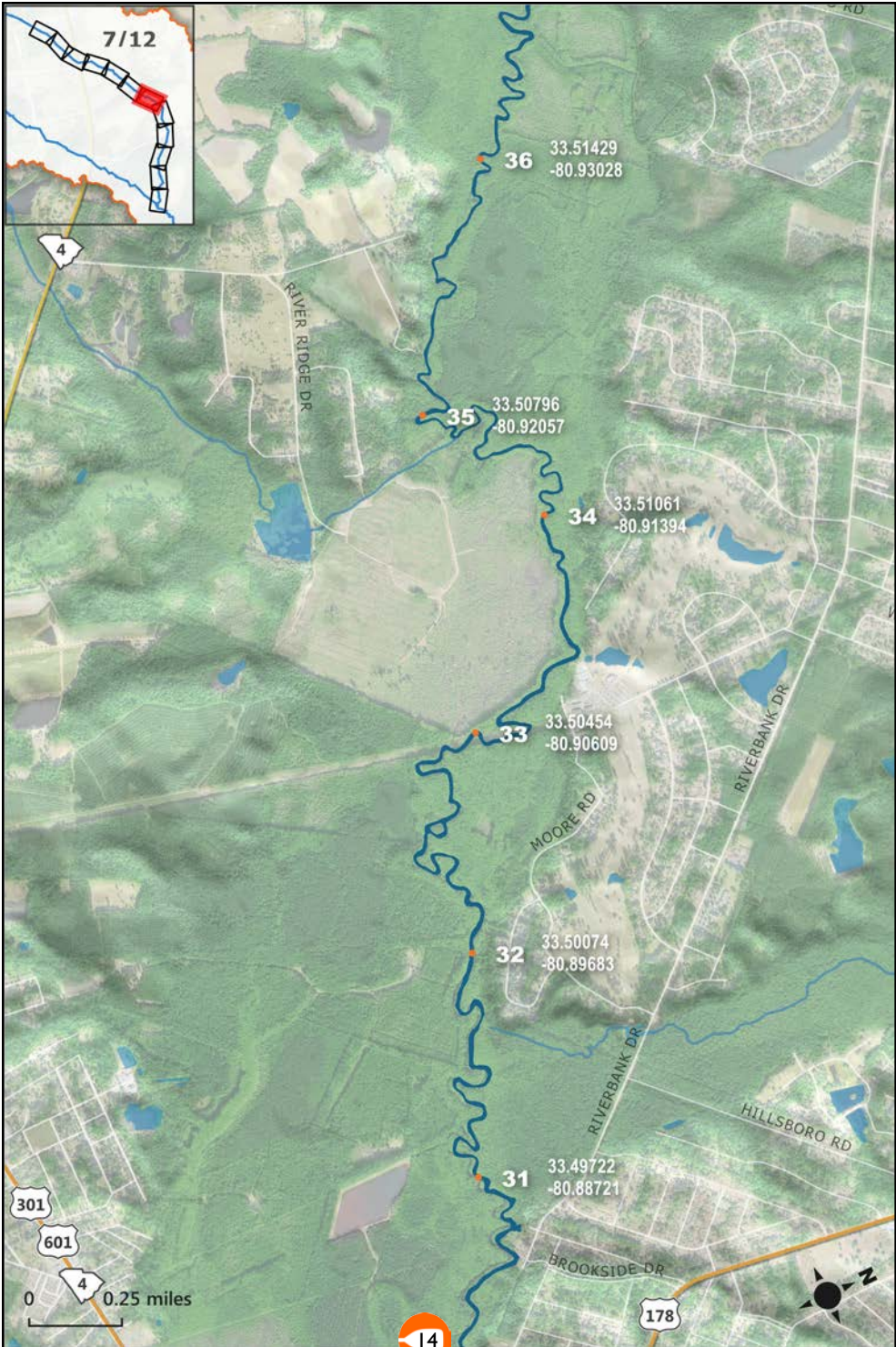


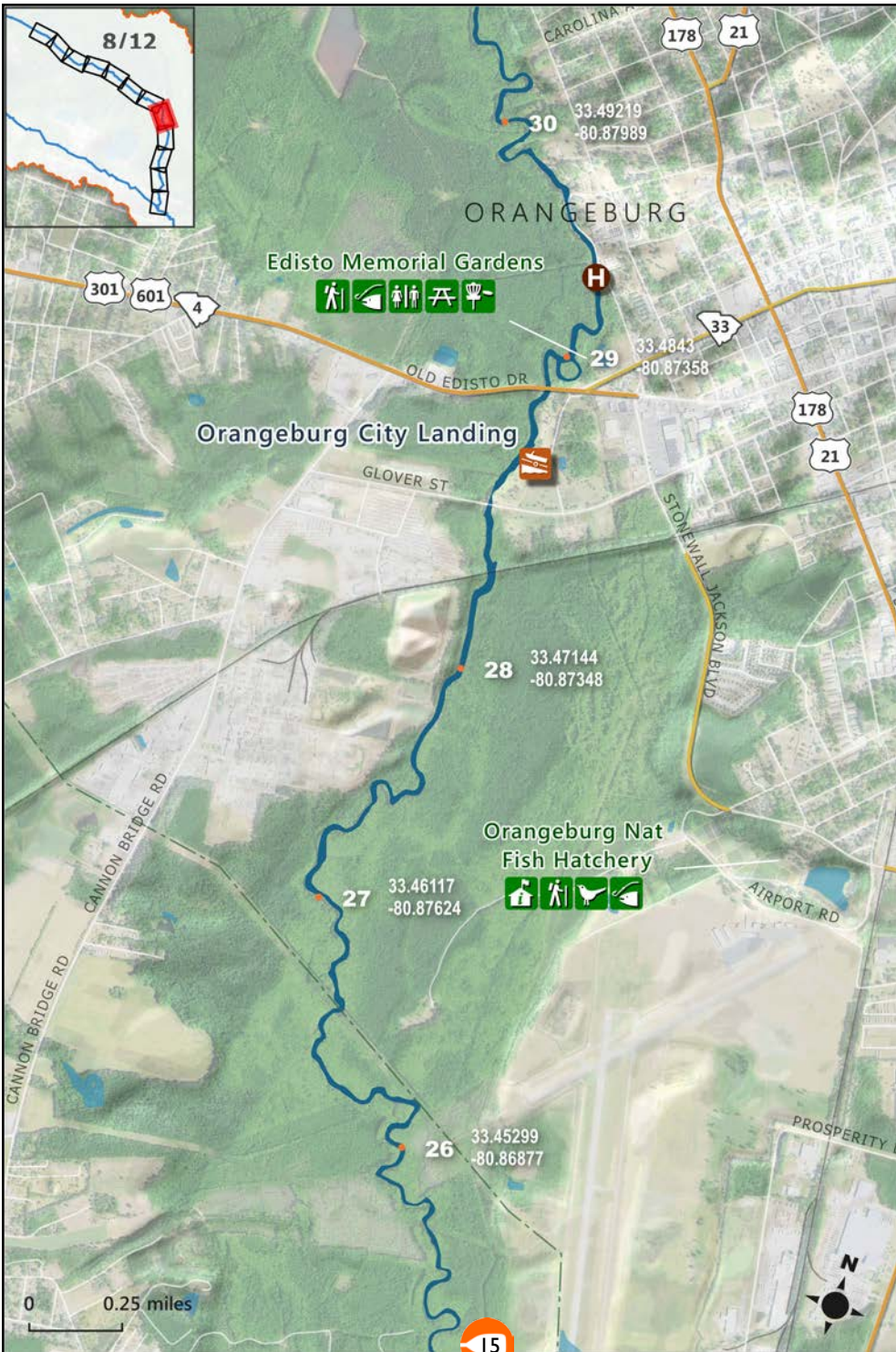


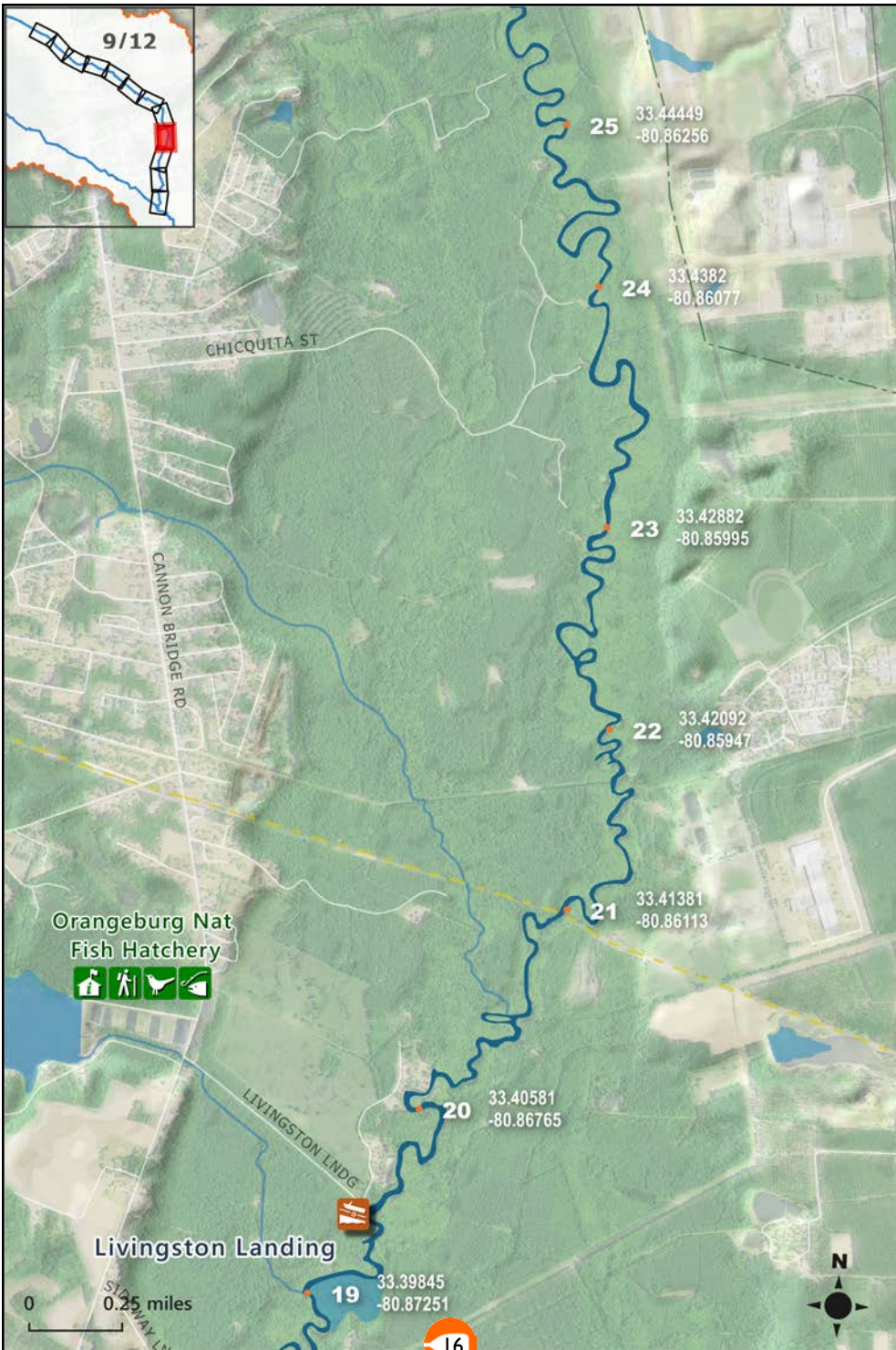
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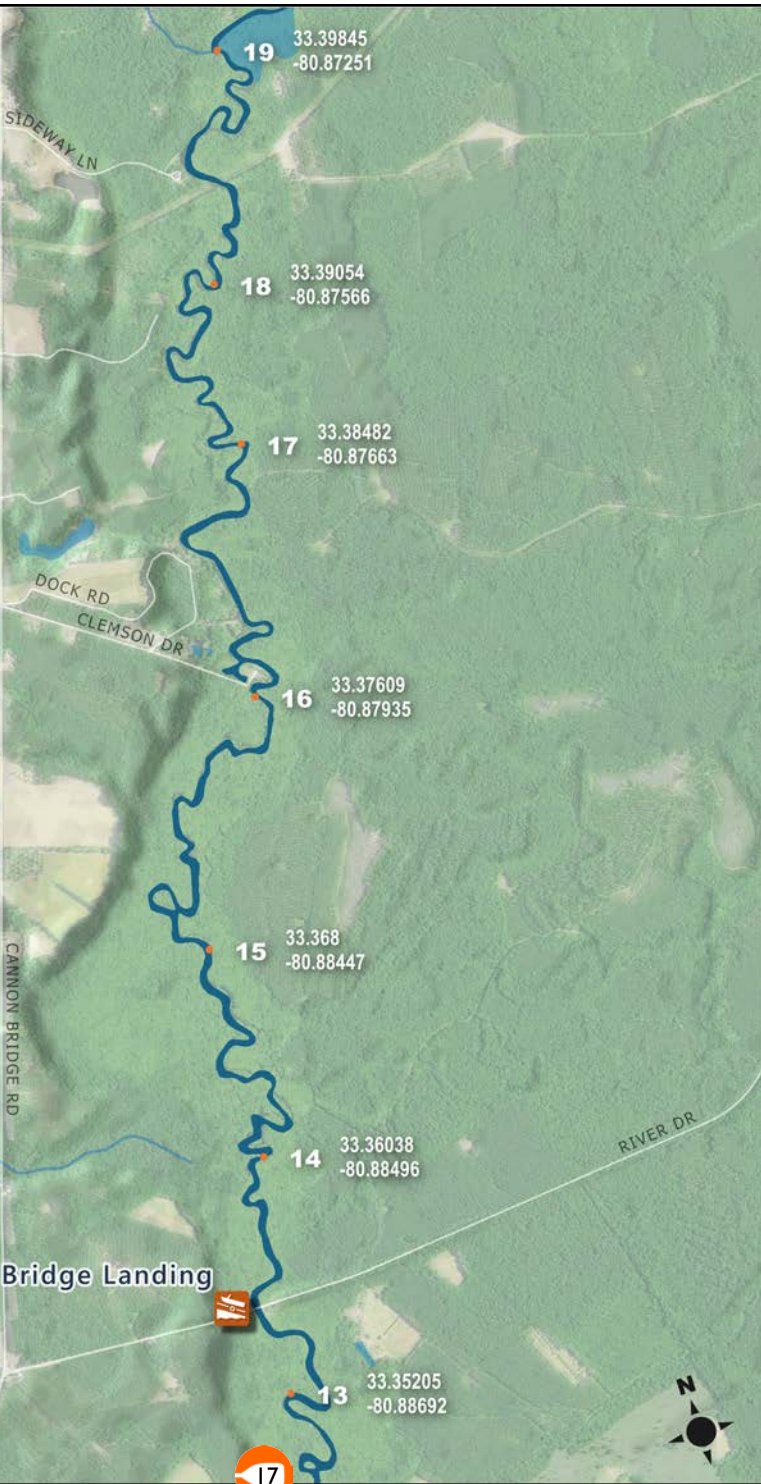
12











17

19 33.39845
-80.87251

18 33.39054
-80.87566

17 33.38482
-80.87663

16 33.37609
-80.87935

15 33.368
-80.88447

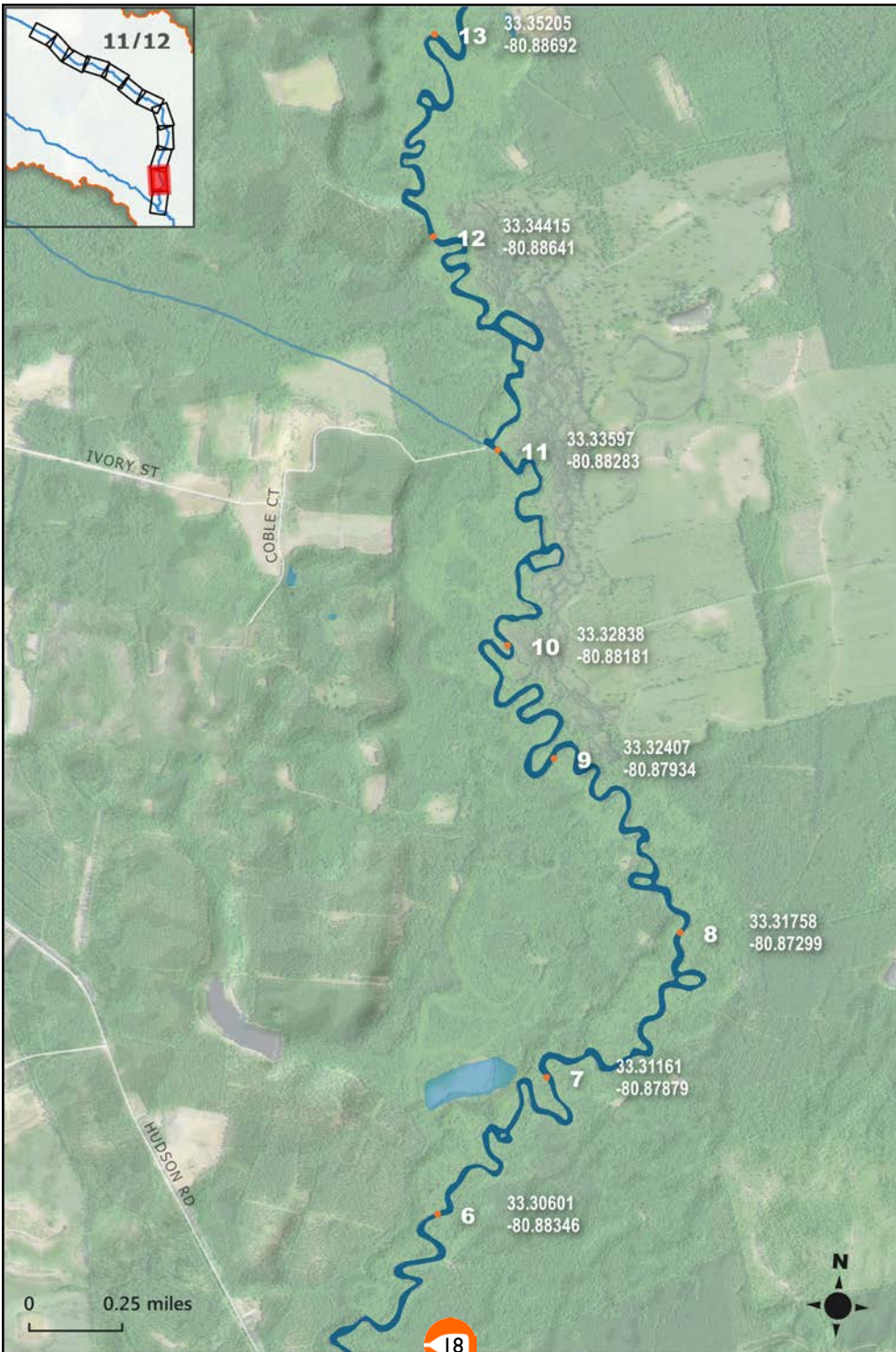
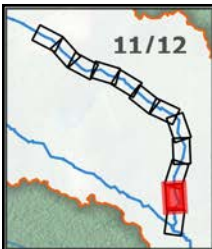
14 33.36038
-80.88496

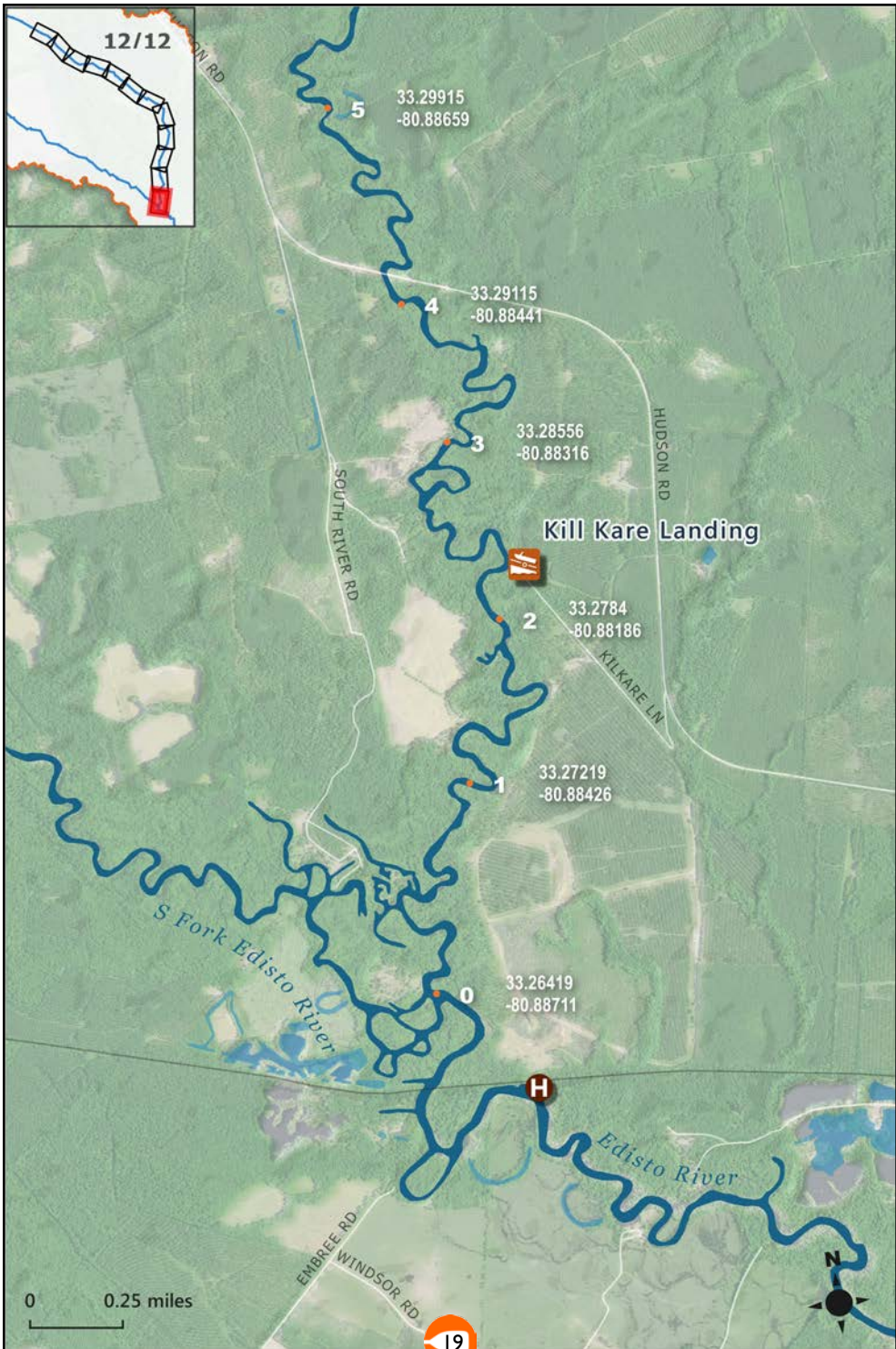
13 33.35205
-80.88692

Rowe's Bridge Landing

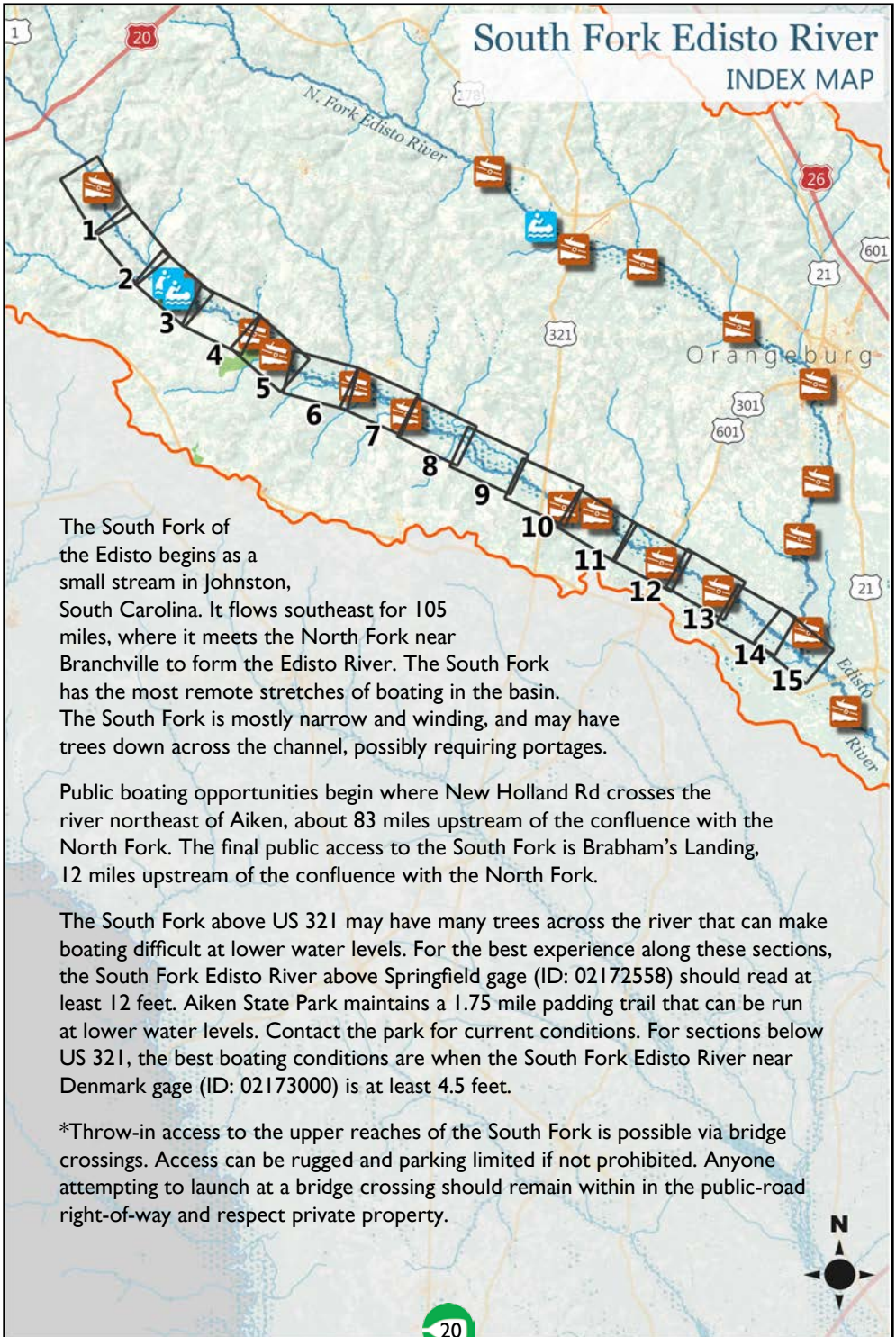
0 0.25 miles







South Fork Edisto River INDEX MAP

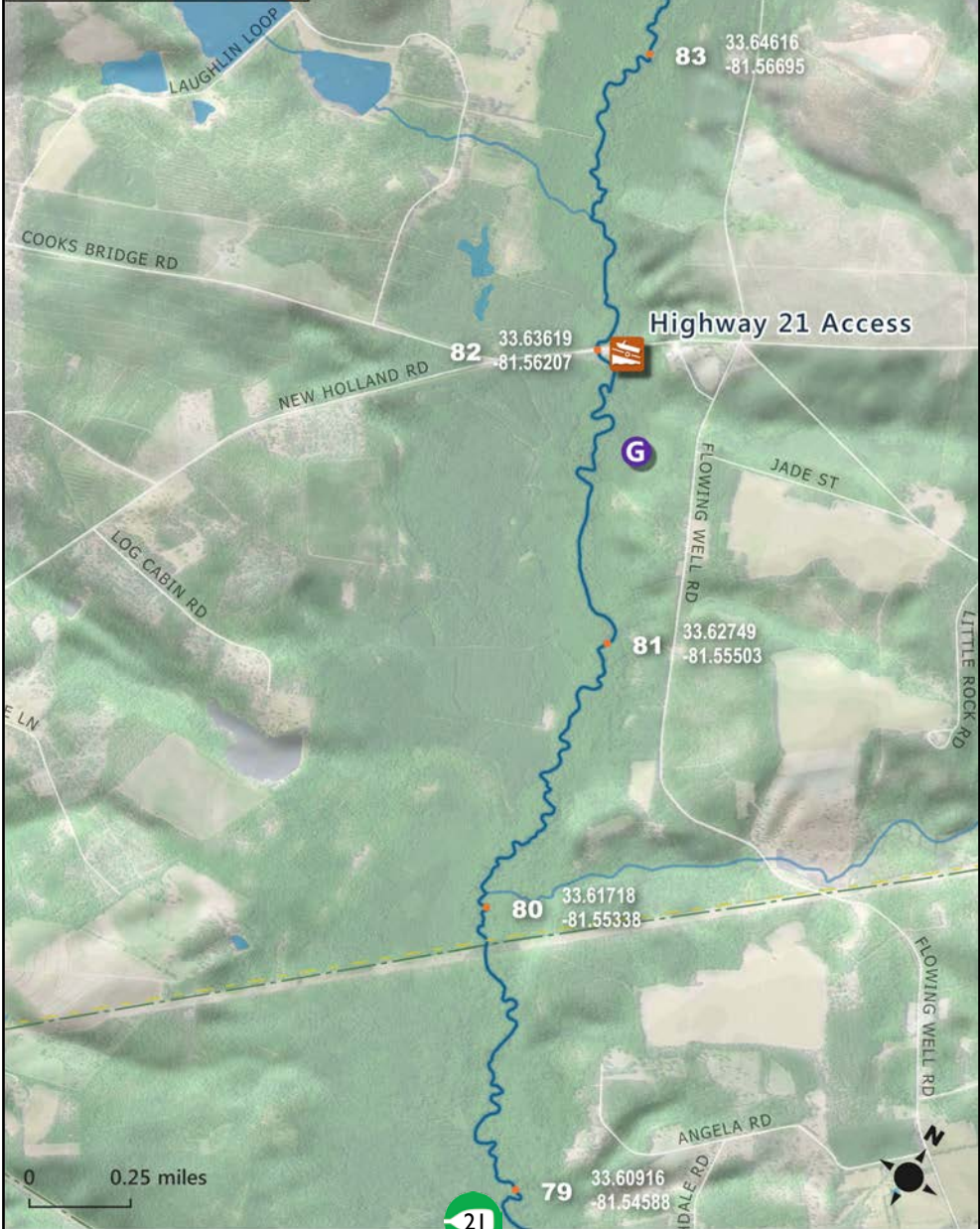


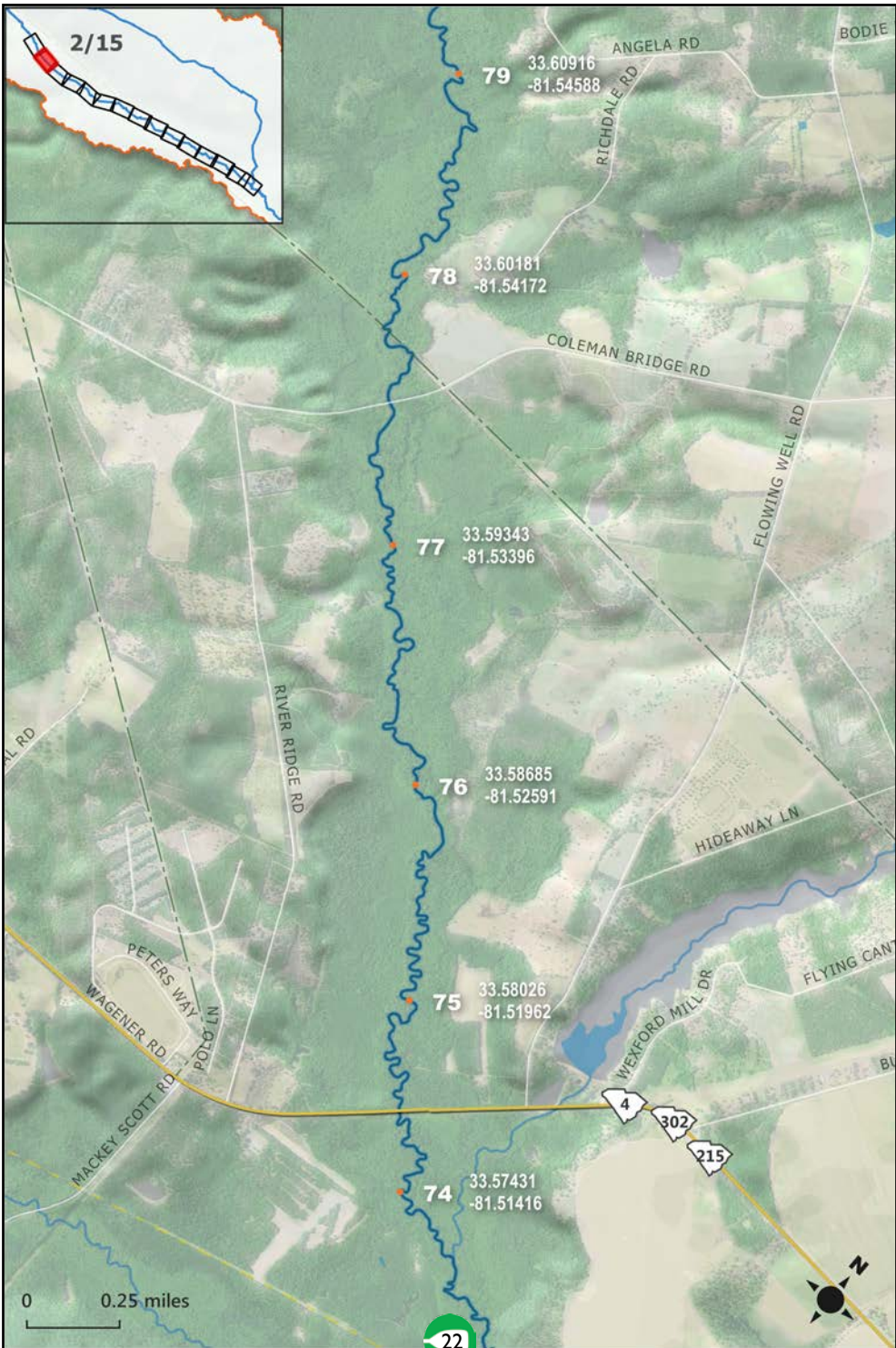
The South Fork of the Edisto begins as a small stream in Johnston, South Carolina. It flows southeast for 105 miles, where it meets the North Fork near Branchville to form the Edisto River. The South Fork has the most remote stretches of boating in the basin. The South Fork is mostly narrow and winding, and may have trees down across the channel, possibly requiring portages.

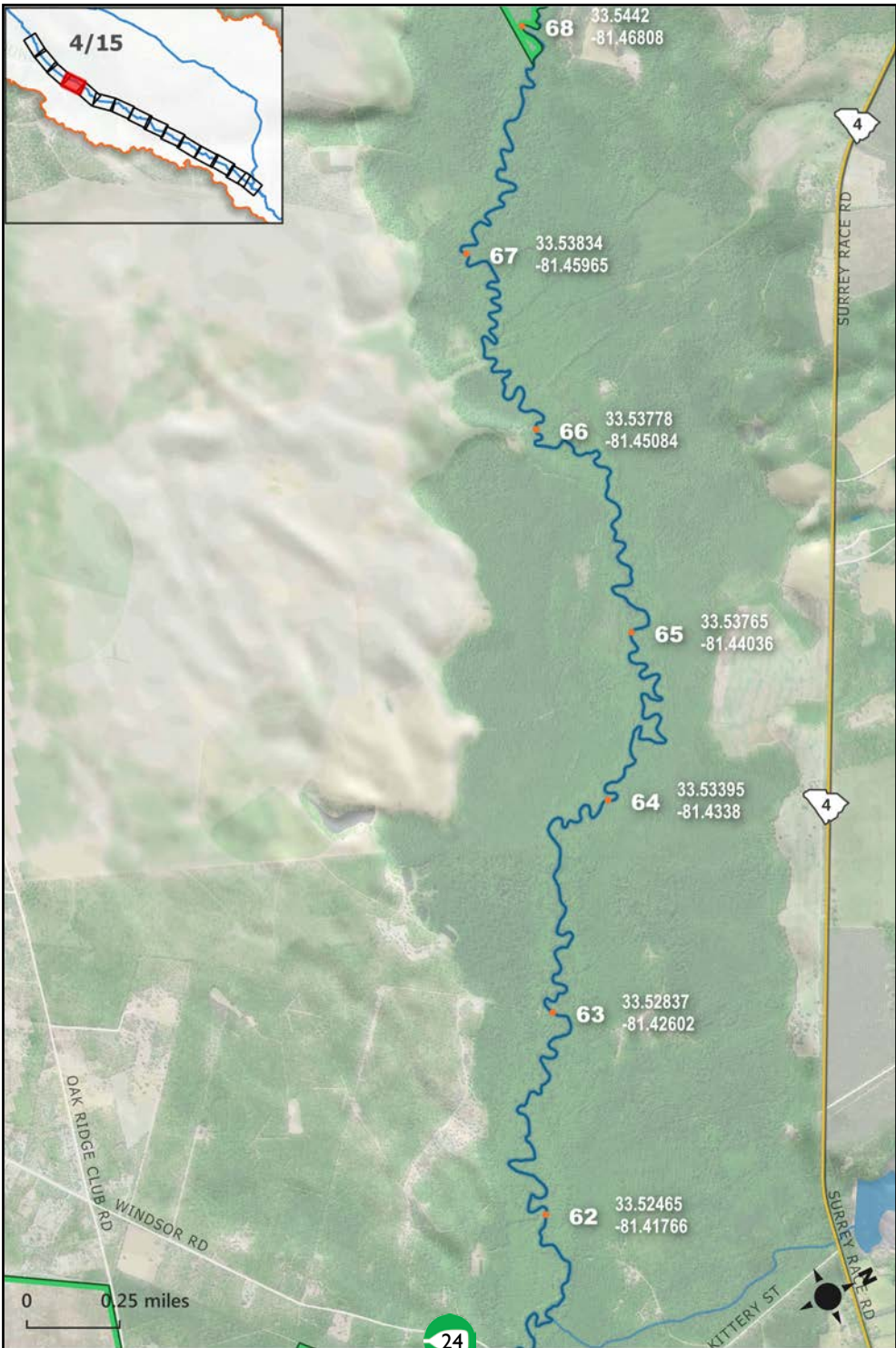
Public boating opportunities begin where New Holland Rd crosses the river northeast of Aiken, about 83 miles upstream of the confluence with the North Fork. The final public access to the South Fork is Brabham's Landing, 12 miles upstream of the confluence with the North Fork.

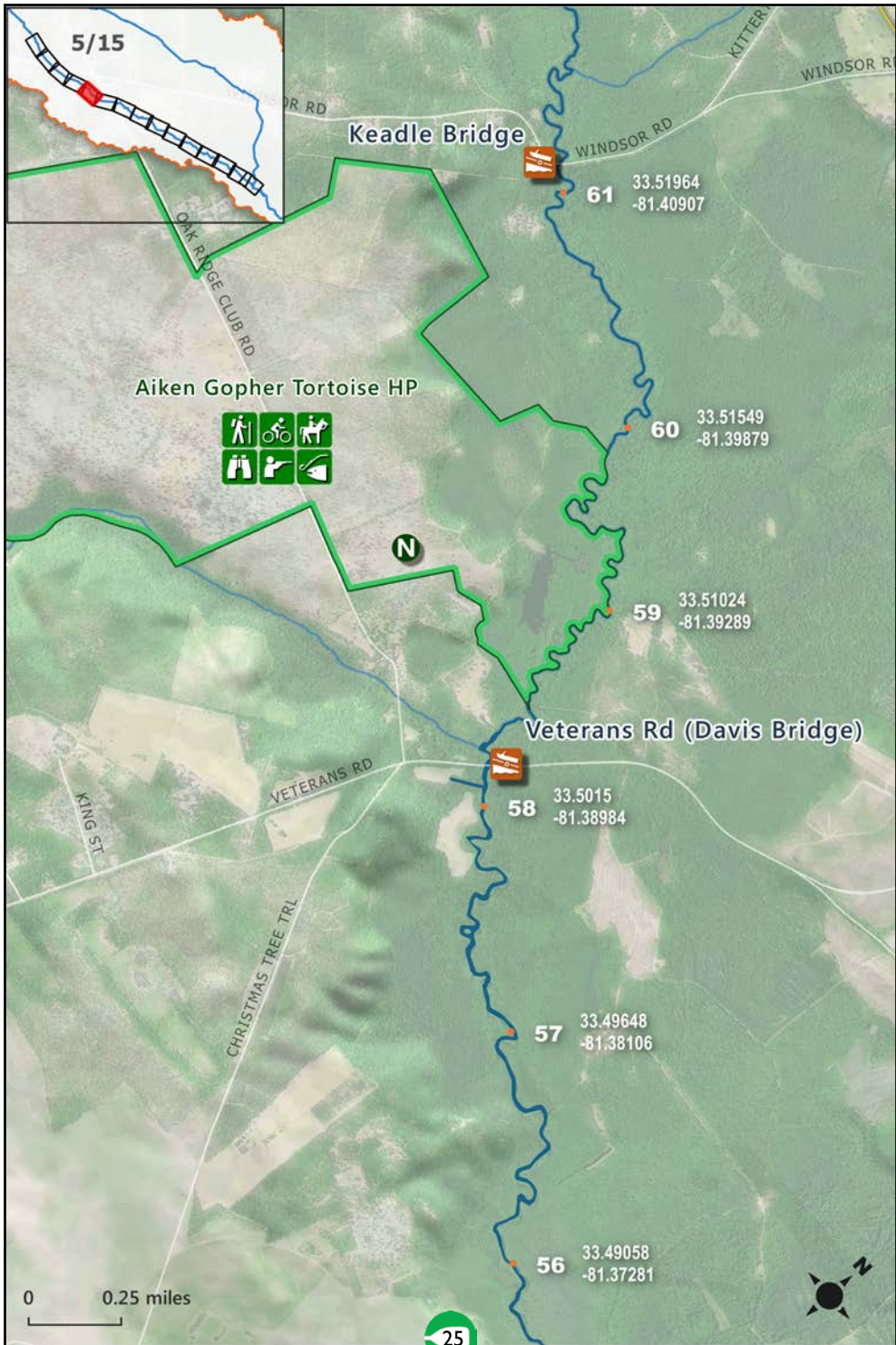
The South Fork above US 321 may have many trees across the river that can make boating difficult at lower water levels. For the best experience along these sections, the South Fork Edisto River above Springfield gage (ID: 02172558) should read at least 12 feet. Aiken State Park maintains a 1.75 mile padding trail that can be run at lower water levels. Contact the park for current conditions. For sections below US 321, the best boating conditions are when the South Fork Edisto River near Denmark gage (ID: 02173000) is at least 4.5 feet.

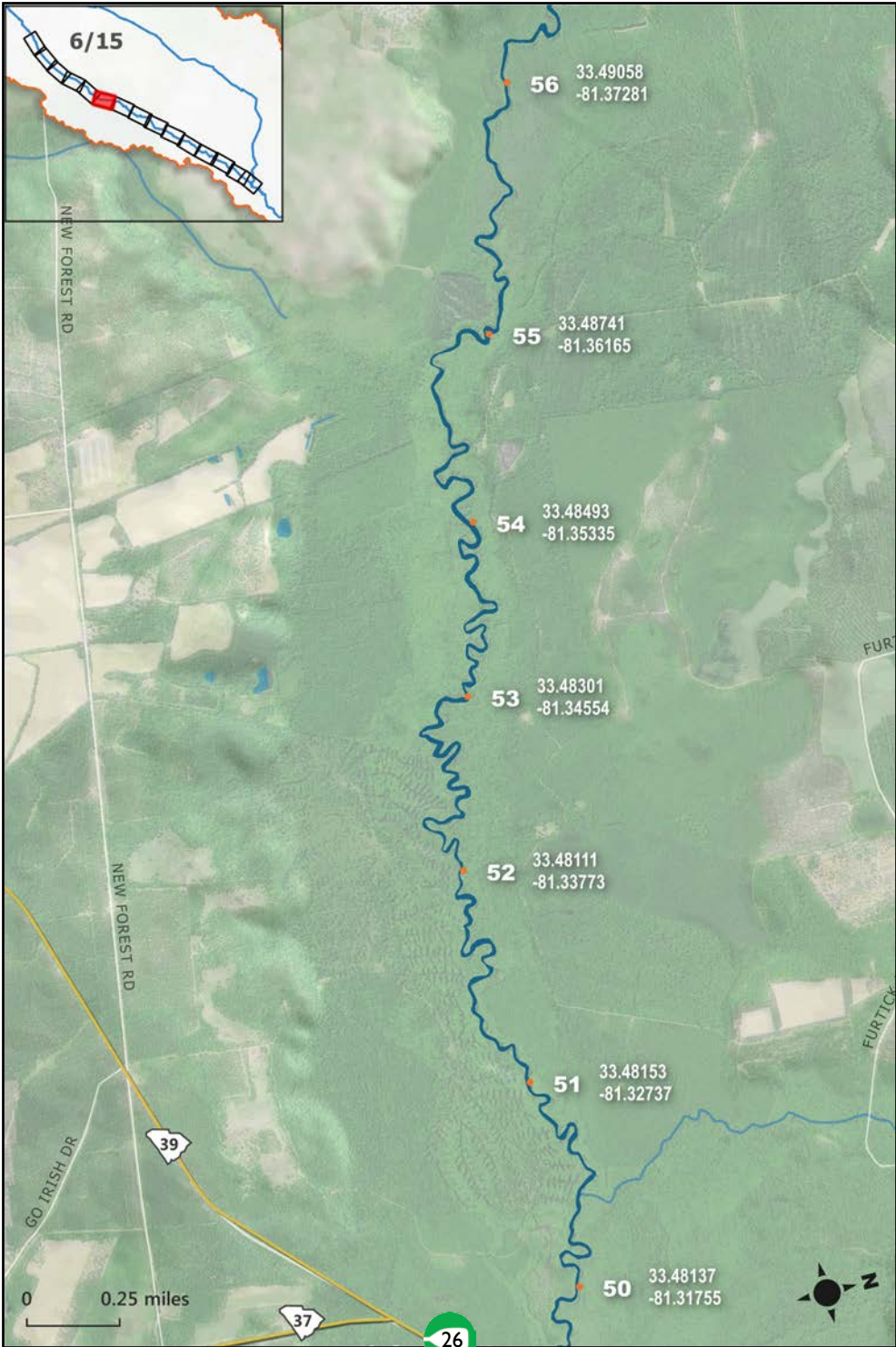
*Throw-in access to the upper reaches of the South Fork is possible via bridge crossings. Access can be rugged and parking limited if not prohibited. Anyone attempting to launch at a bridge crossing should remain within in the public-road right-of-way and respect private property.

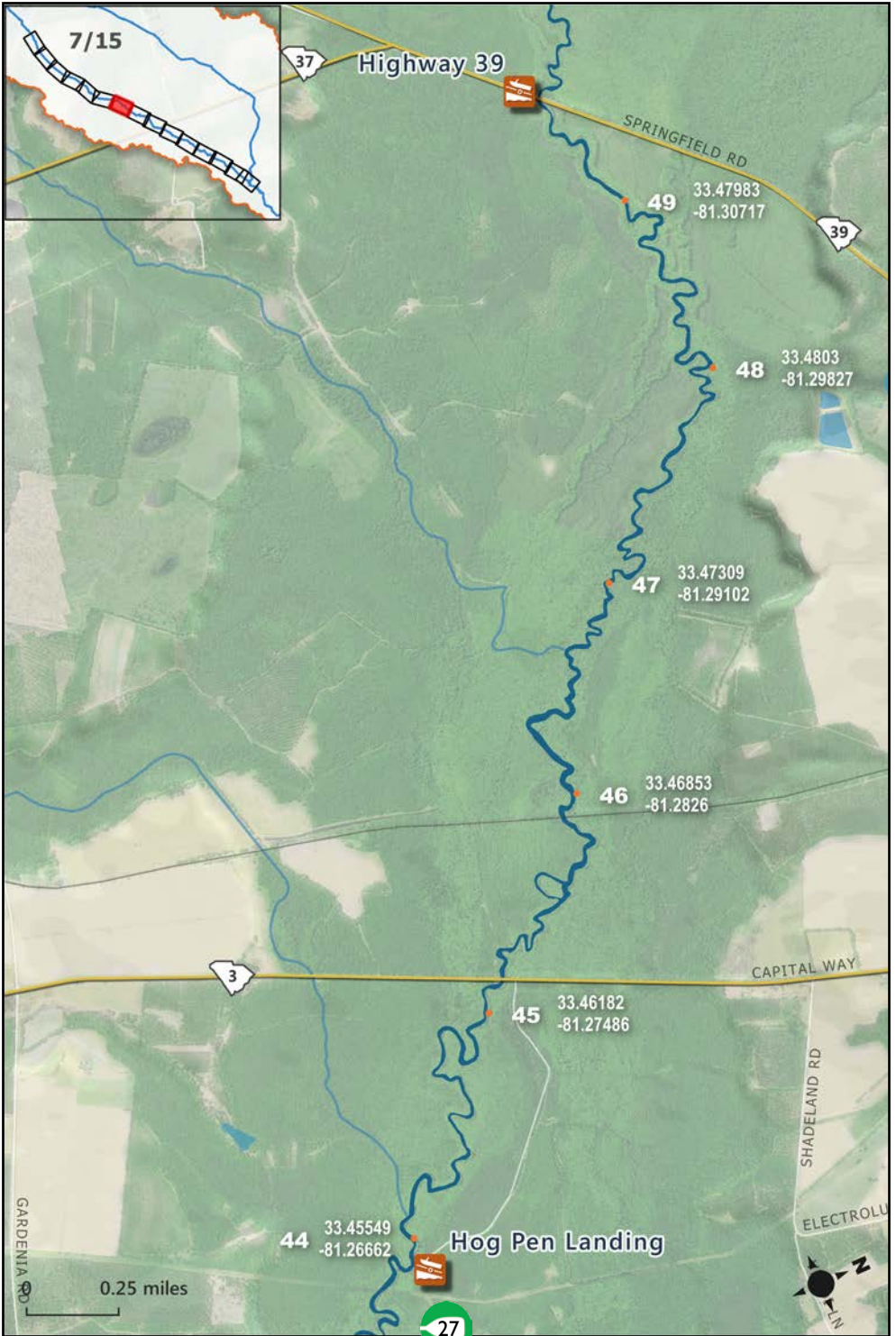


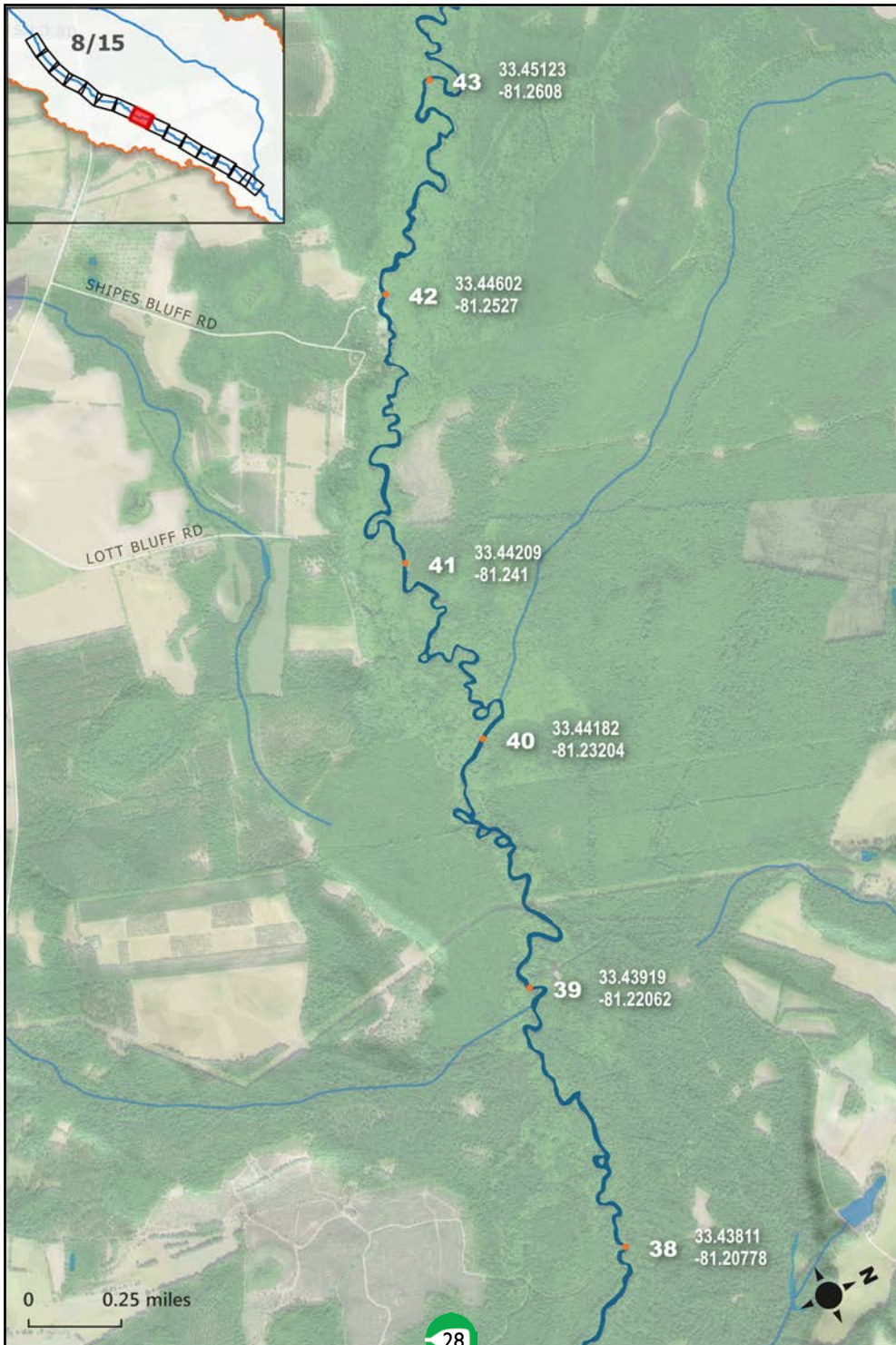


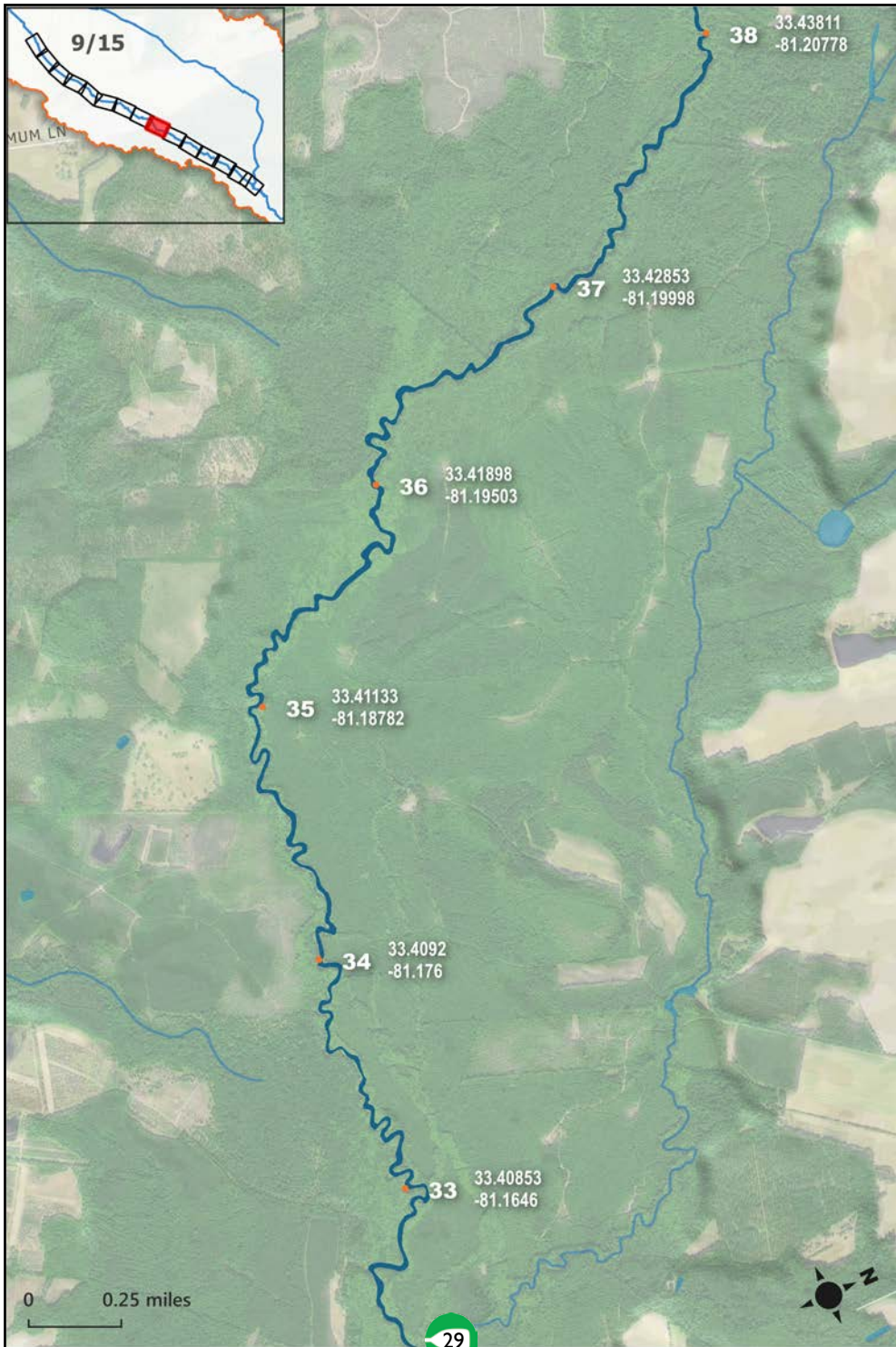


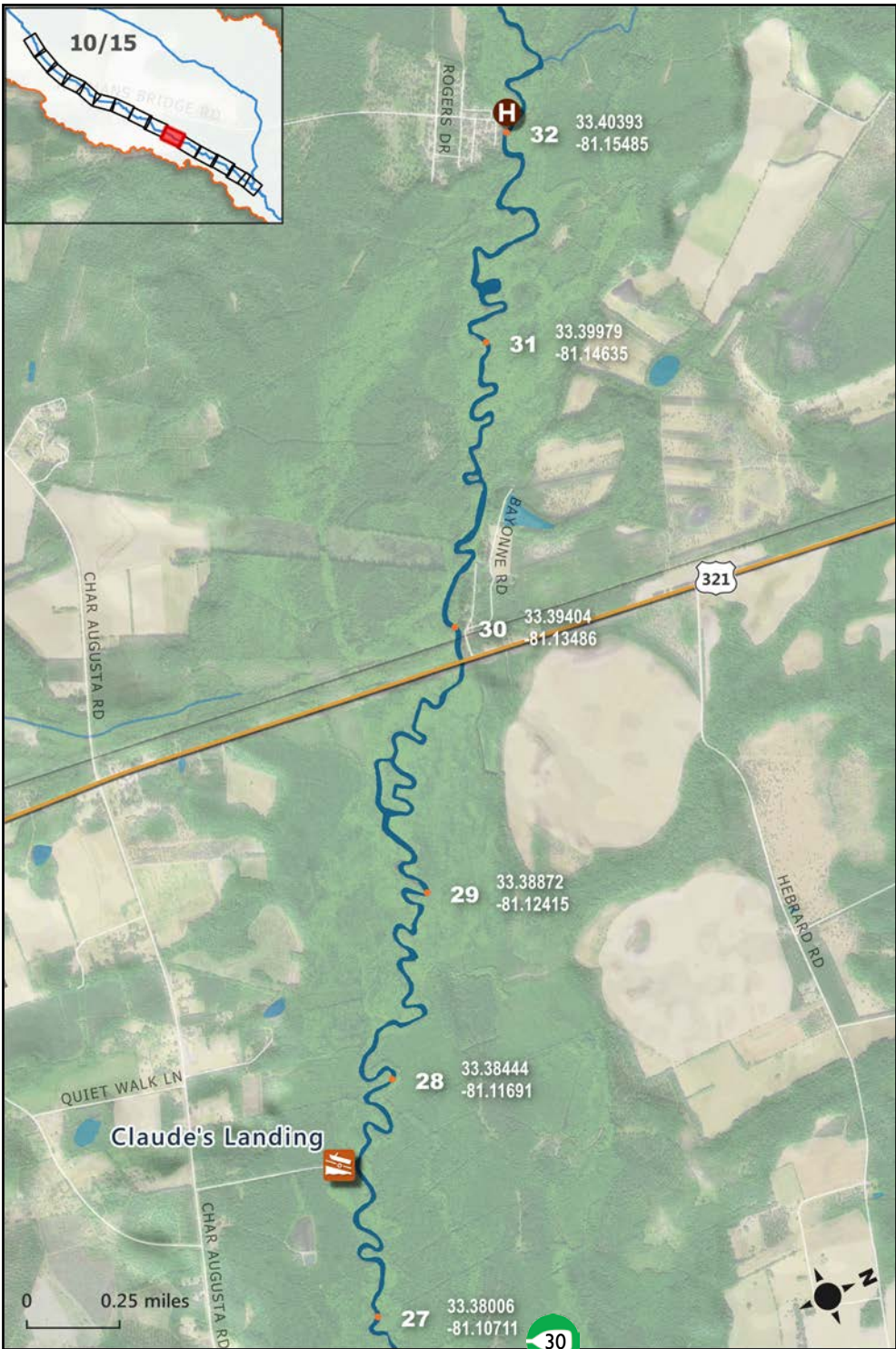


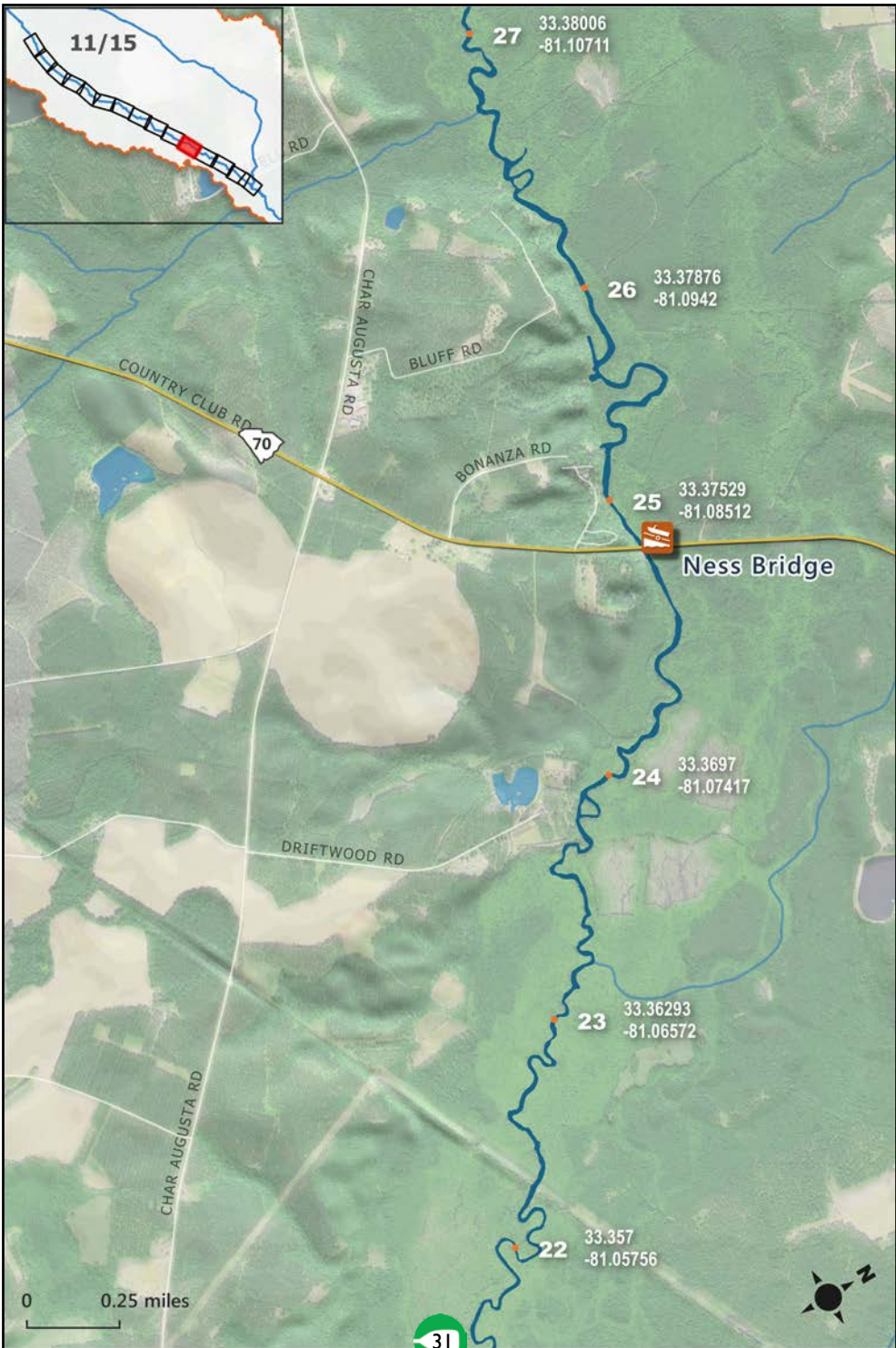


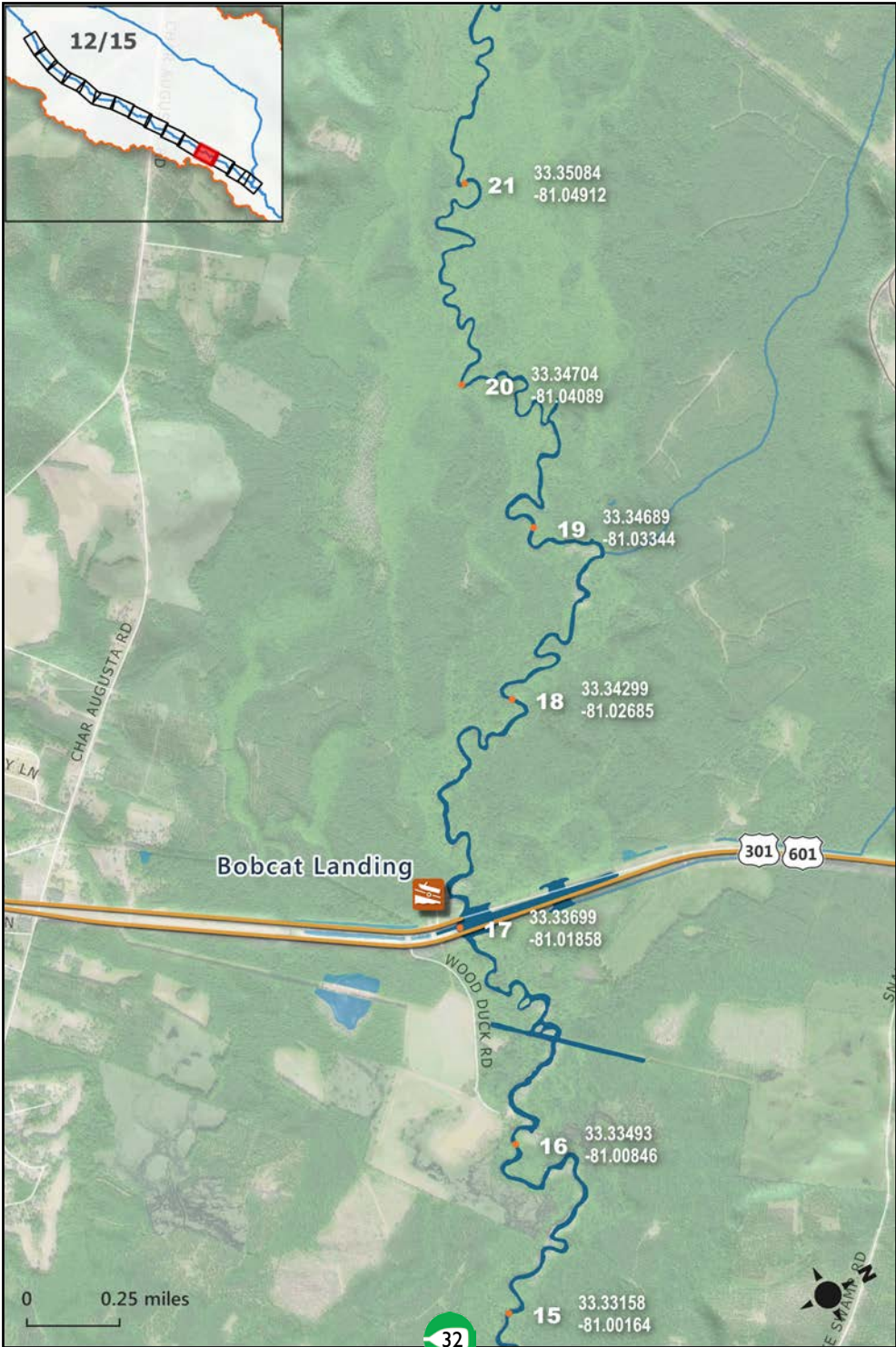


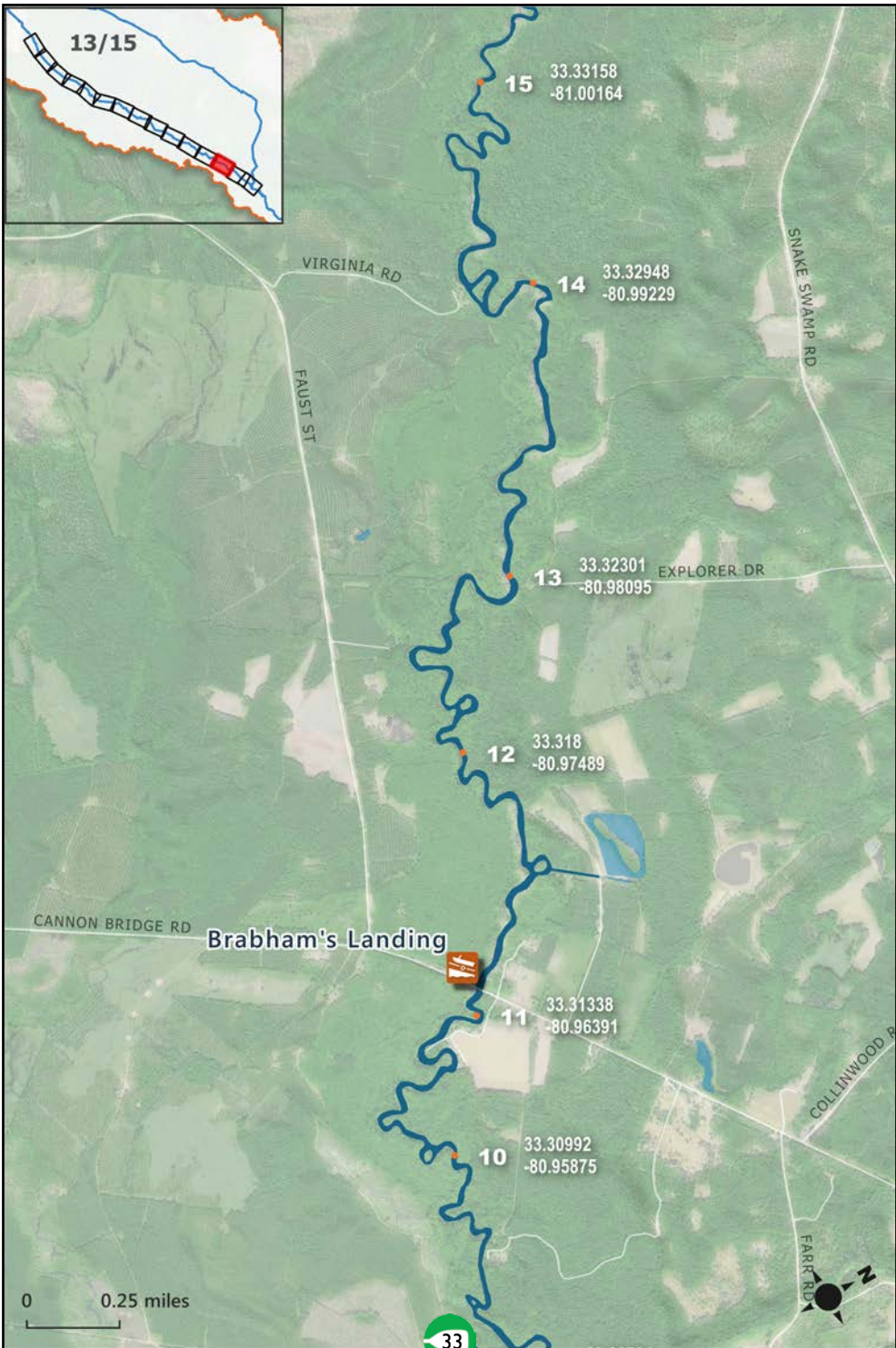


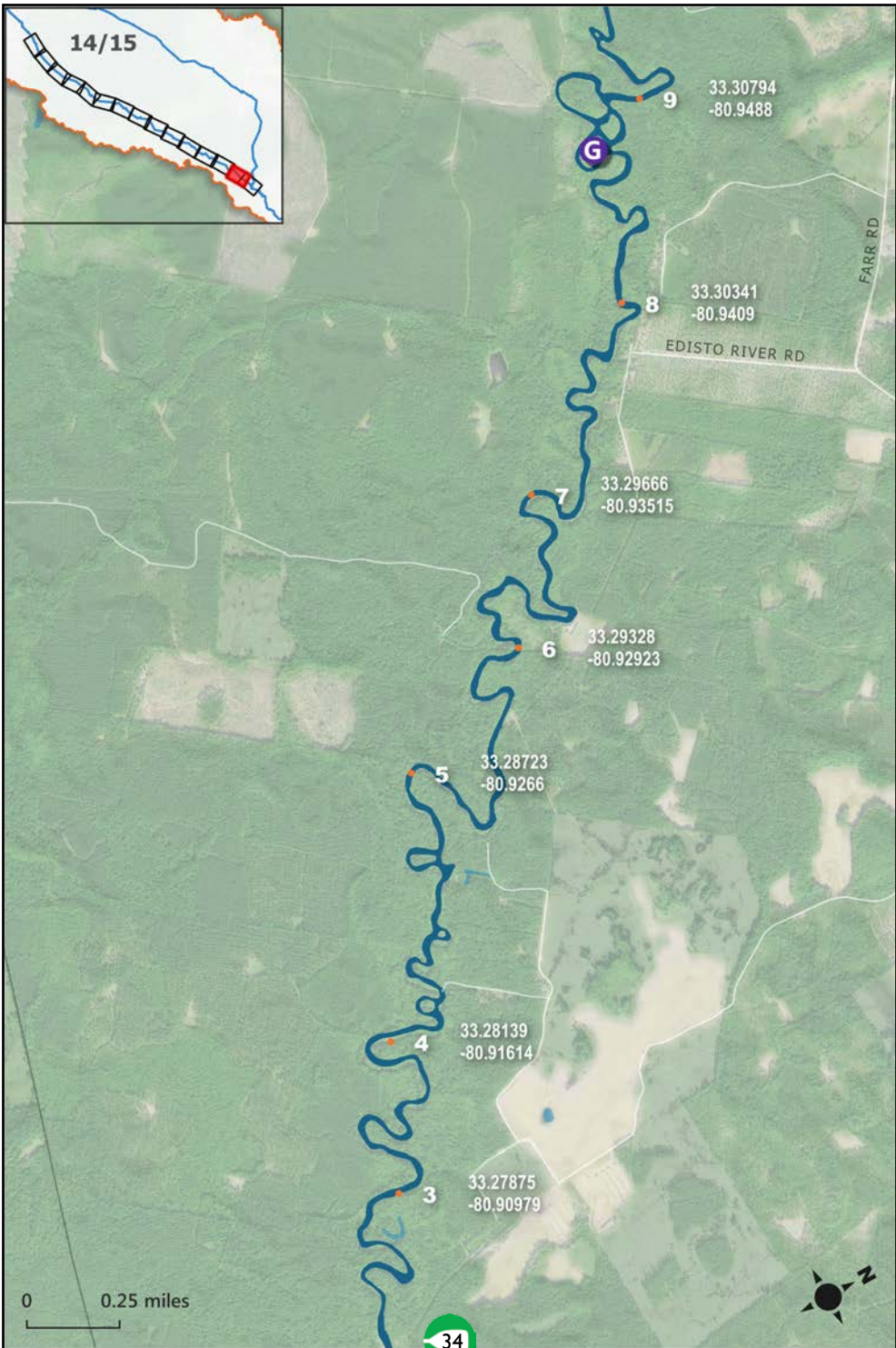


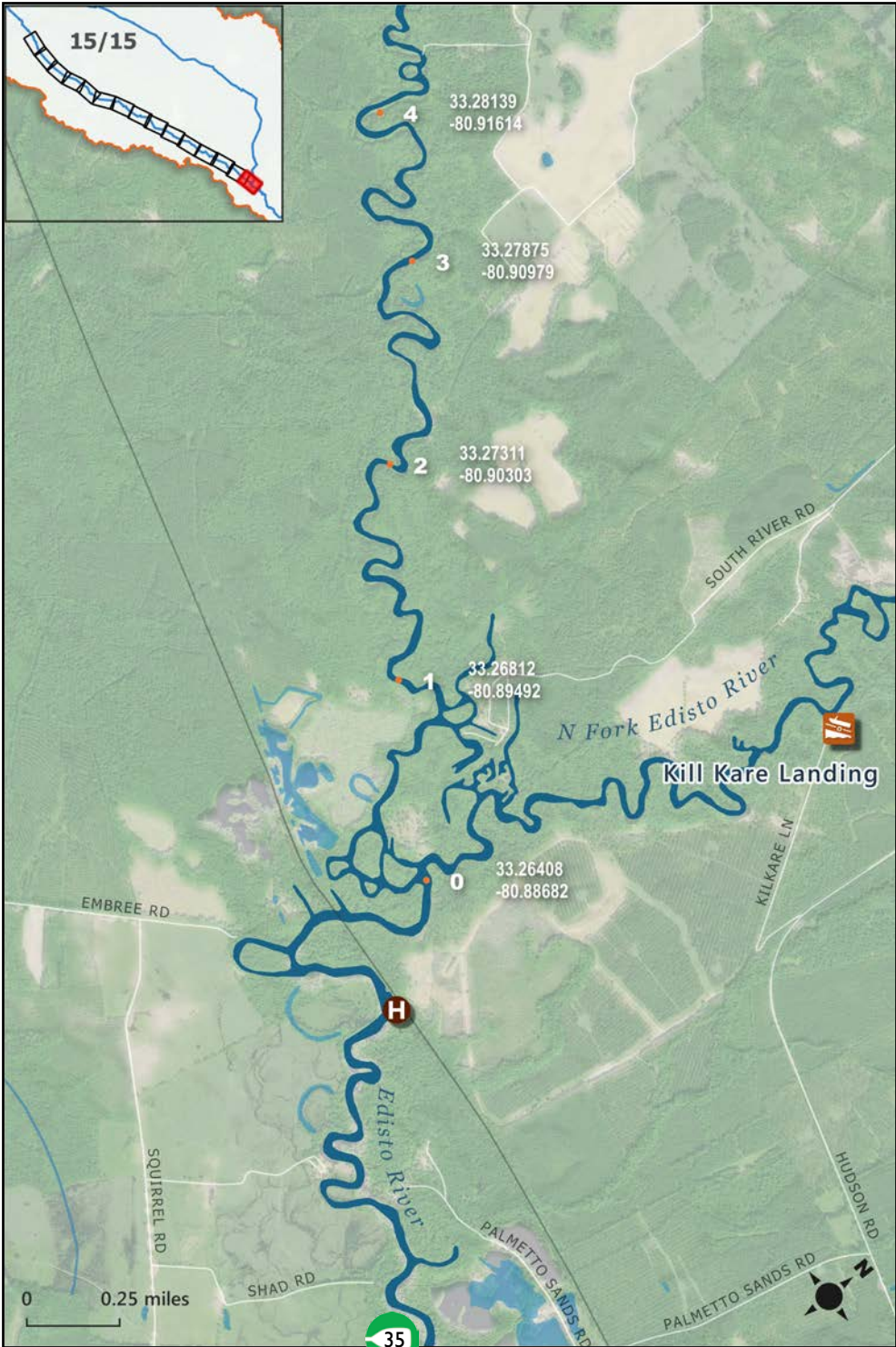












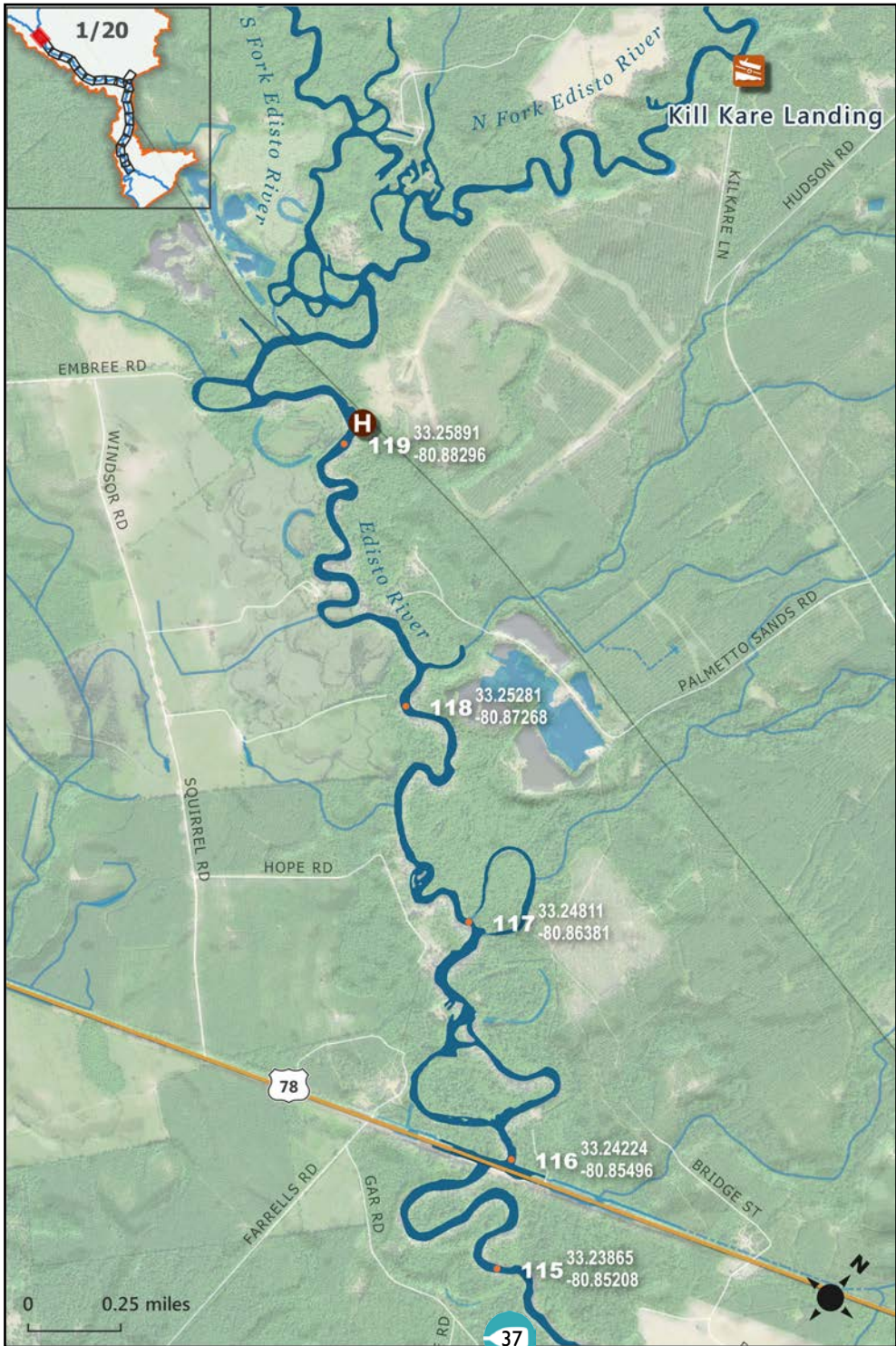
Edisto River INDEX MAP

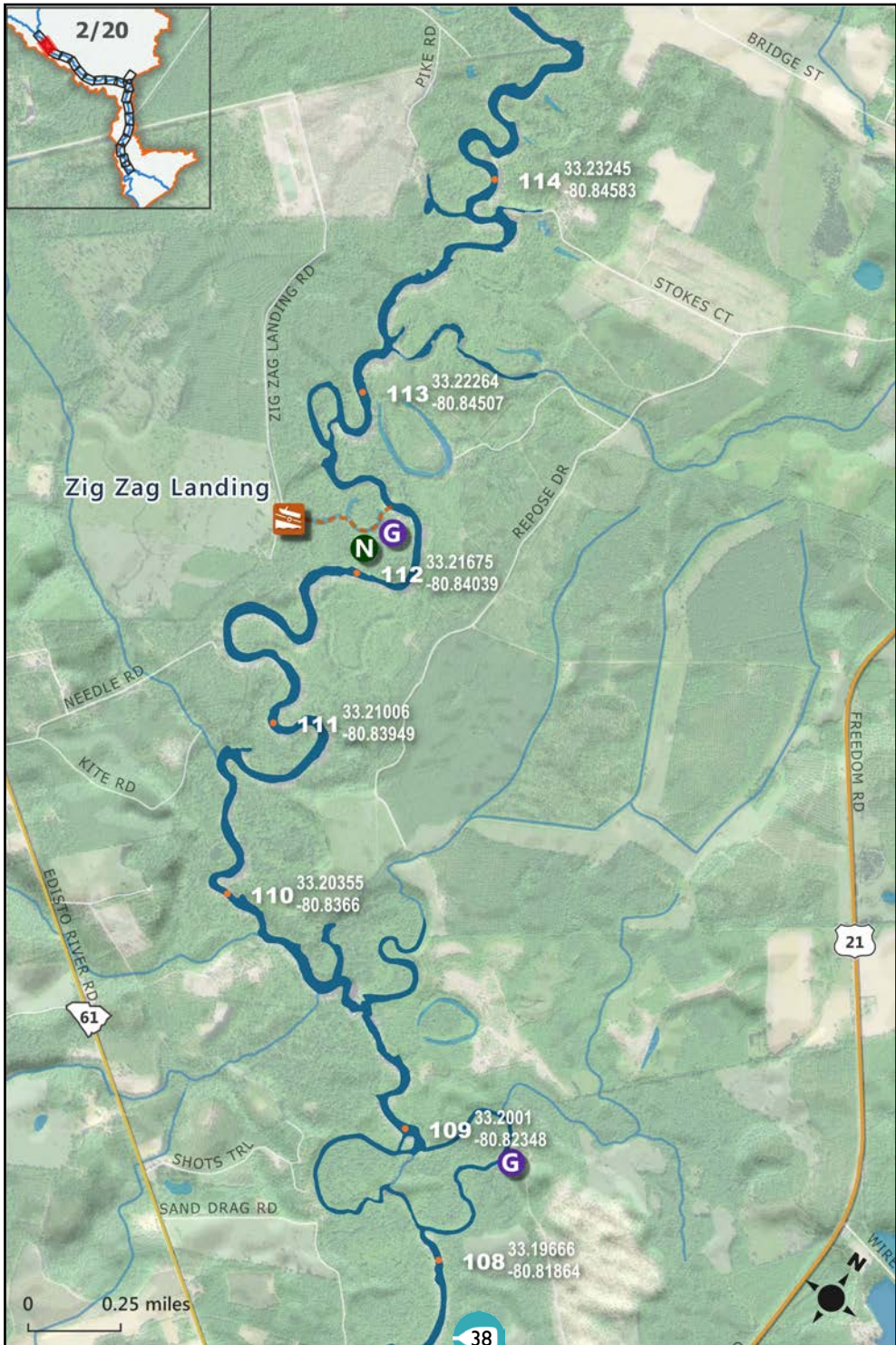
The Edisto River is formed by the confluence of the North and South Forks near Branchville. It flows southeast for almost 60 miles before abutting a large bluff and making a sharp turn south at Givhans Ferry State Park, just downstream of the confluence with Four Hole Swamp. Four Hole Swamp can be paddled upstream from the Edisto River.

The river widens on the "Big Edisto", which makes for fewer obstacles, though the upper half still has some sections with narrow, winding channels. The channel steadily widens as the river heads toward the coast, showing characteristics of a large coastal plain river.

The best paddling conditions are at flows between 2 feet and 10 feet on the *Edisto River near Givhans gage* (ID: 02175000). Flows below 2 feet will require portaging around fallen trees and shallow stretches. Flows above 10 feet are flood stage, during which boating is not recommended.

The Edisto begins to be tidally influenced around US Highway 17 and begins to transition into a coastal environment. About 10 miles downriver of US 17, the river diverges into the North and South Edisto, which are connected to other coastal creeks and waterways.





3/20

107 33.18569
-80.81363

21

FREEDOM RD

EDISTO RIVER RD

106 33.17755
-80.80098

61

105 33.17789
-80.79091

AUGUSTA HWY

104 33.1758
-80.78216

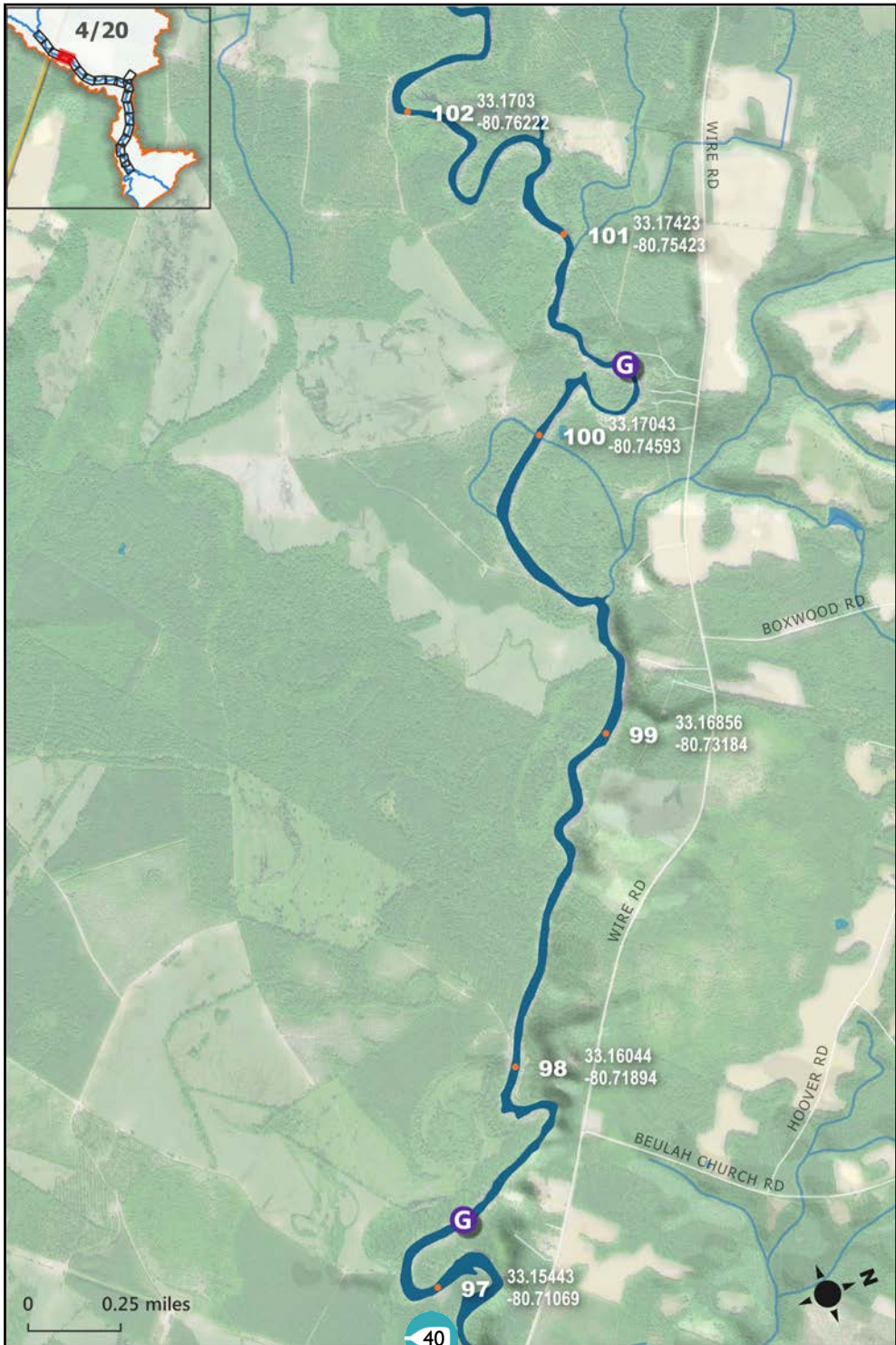
RIVERS EDGE DR

103 33.17162
-80.77154

WIRE RD

0 0.25 miles







97 33.15443
-80.71069

McAlhaney Nature Preserve

G

96 33.1511
-80.70519

95 33.14246
-80.69882

94 33.13378
-80.69252

93 33.12896
-80.68967

92 33.12296
-80.68026

91 33.11373
-80.67441

CATHOLE LN

MAPLE BRANCH RD

EDISTO RIVER RD

WIRE RD

SALCRO LN

Green Pond Church Landing

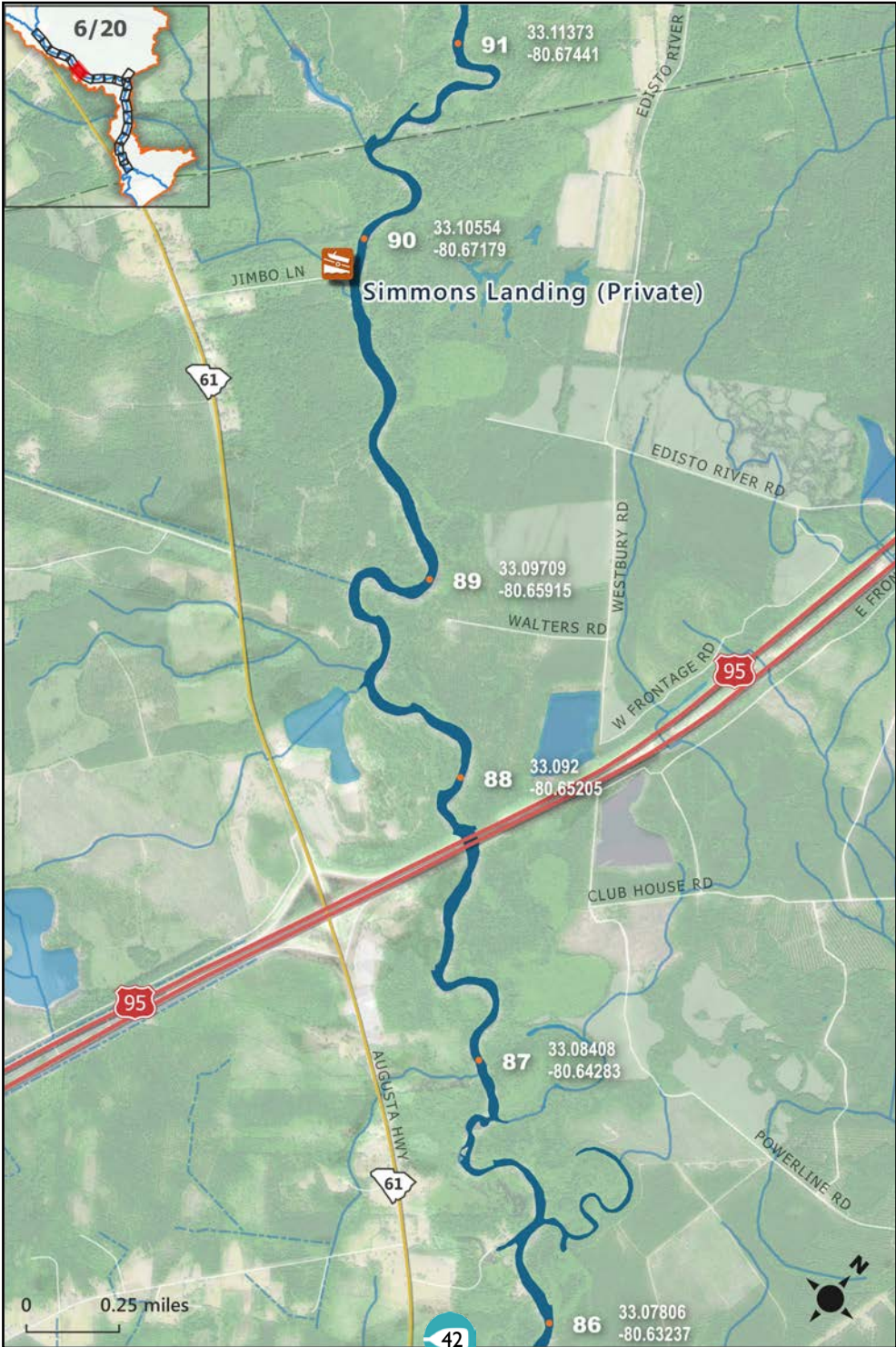


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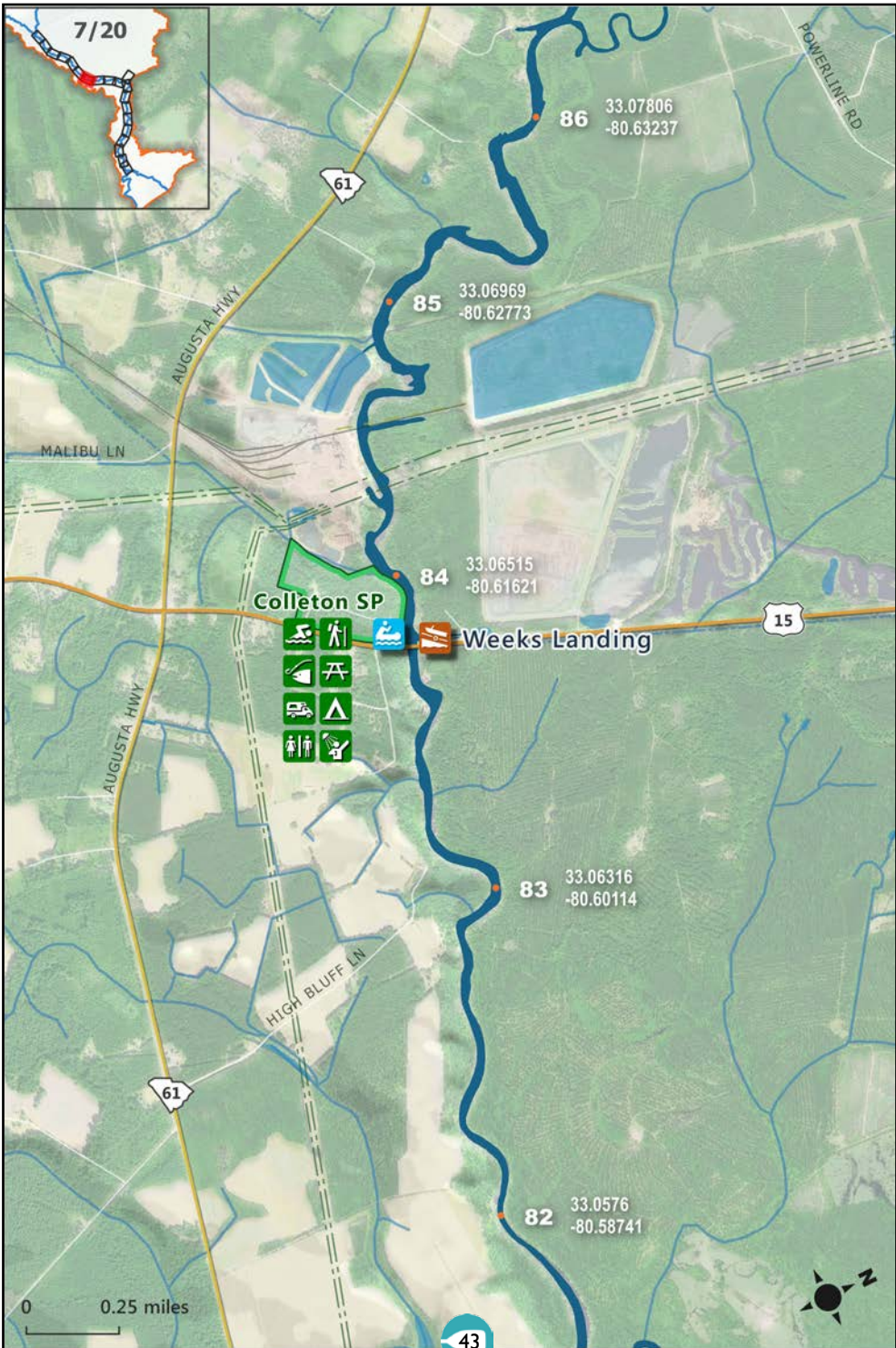
0 0.25 miles

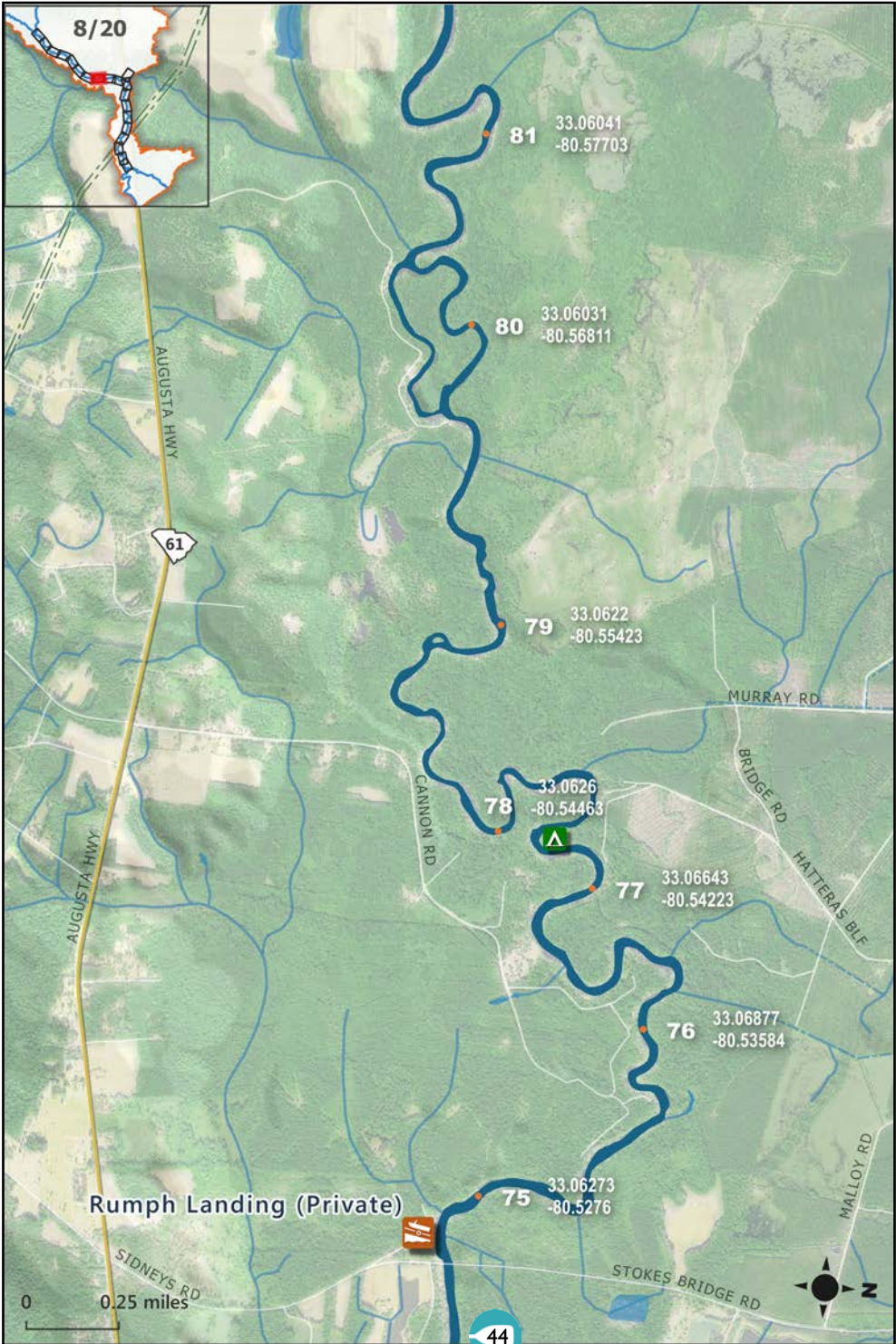


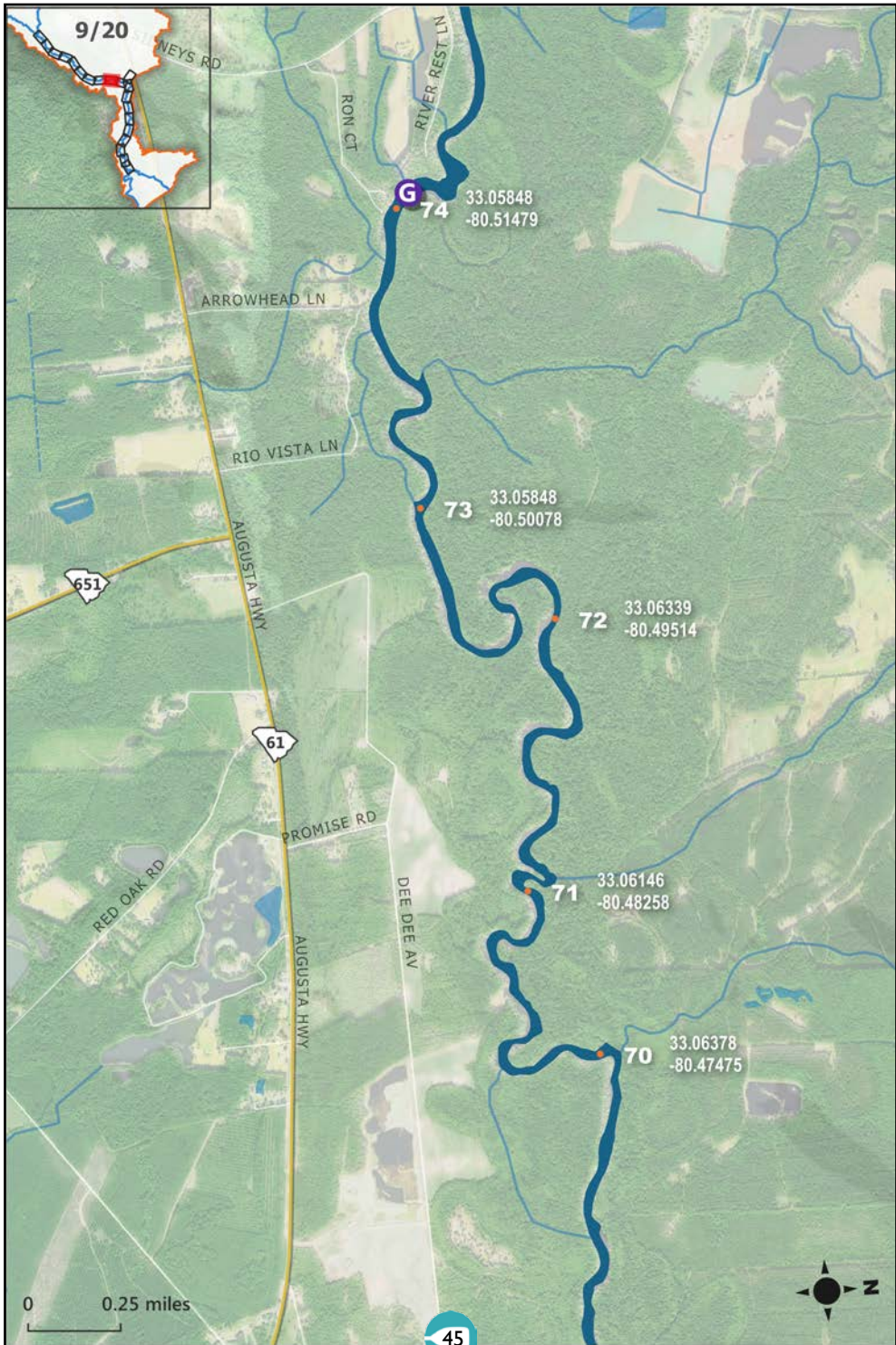


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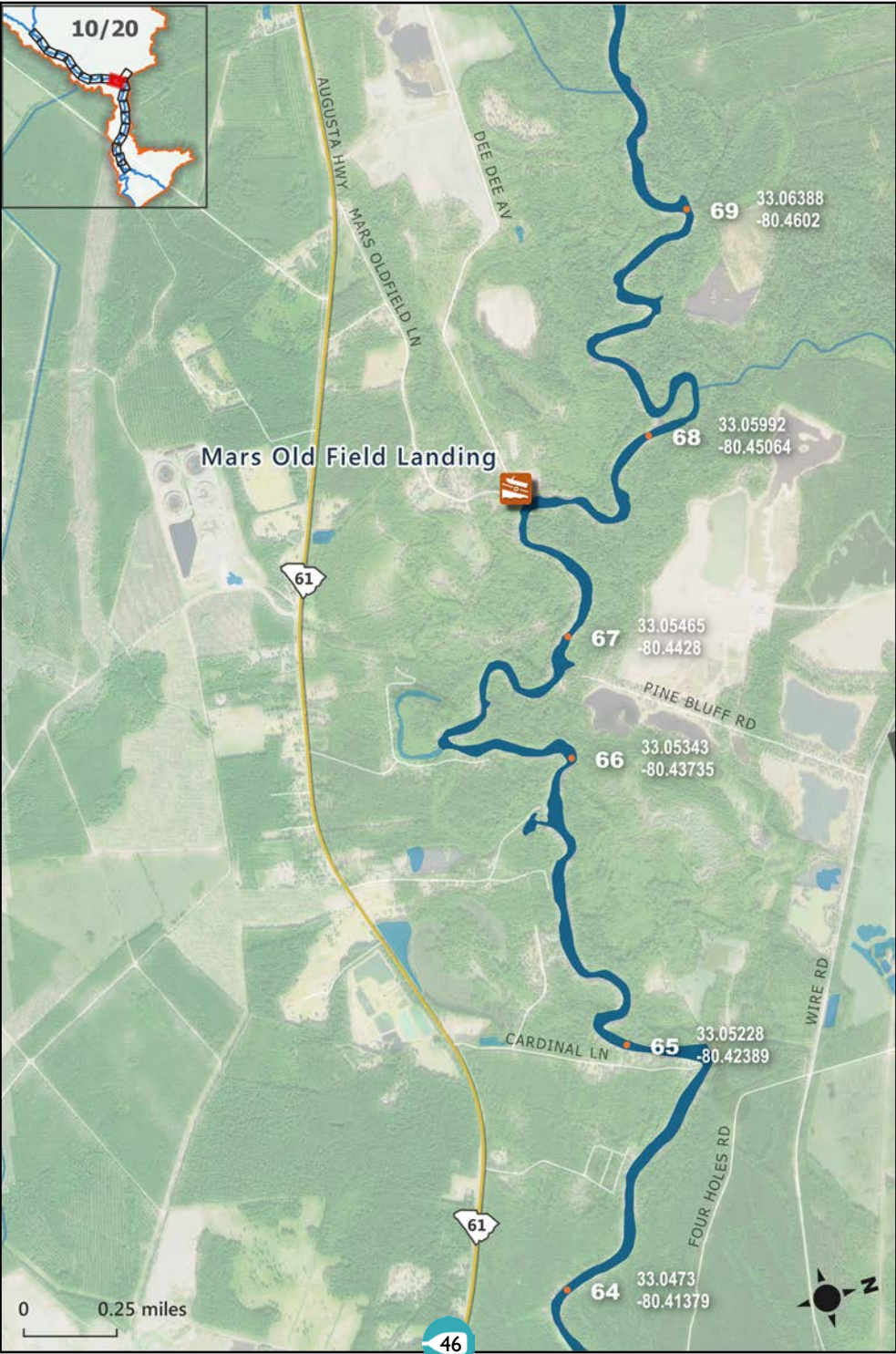
Simmons Landing (Private)







10/20



Mars Old Field Landing

61

61

46

69 33.06388
-80.4602

68 33.05992
-80.45064

67 33.05465
-80.4428

66 33.05343
-80.43735

PINE BLUFF RD

65 33.05228
-80.42389

CARDINAL LN

64 33.0473
-80.41379

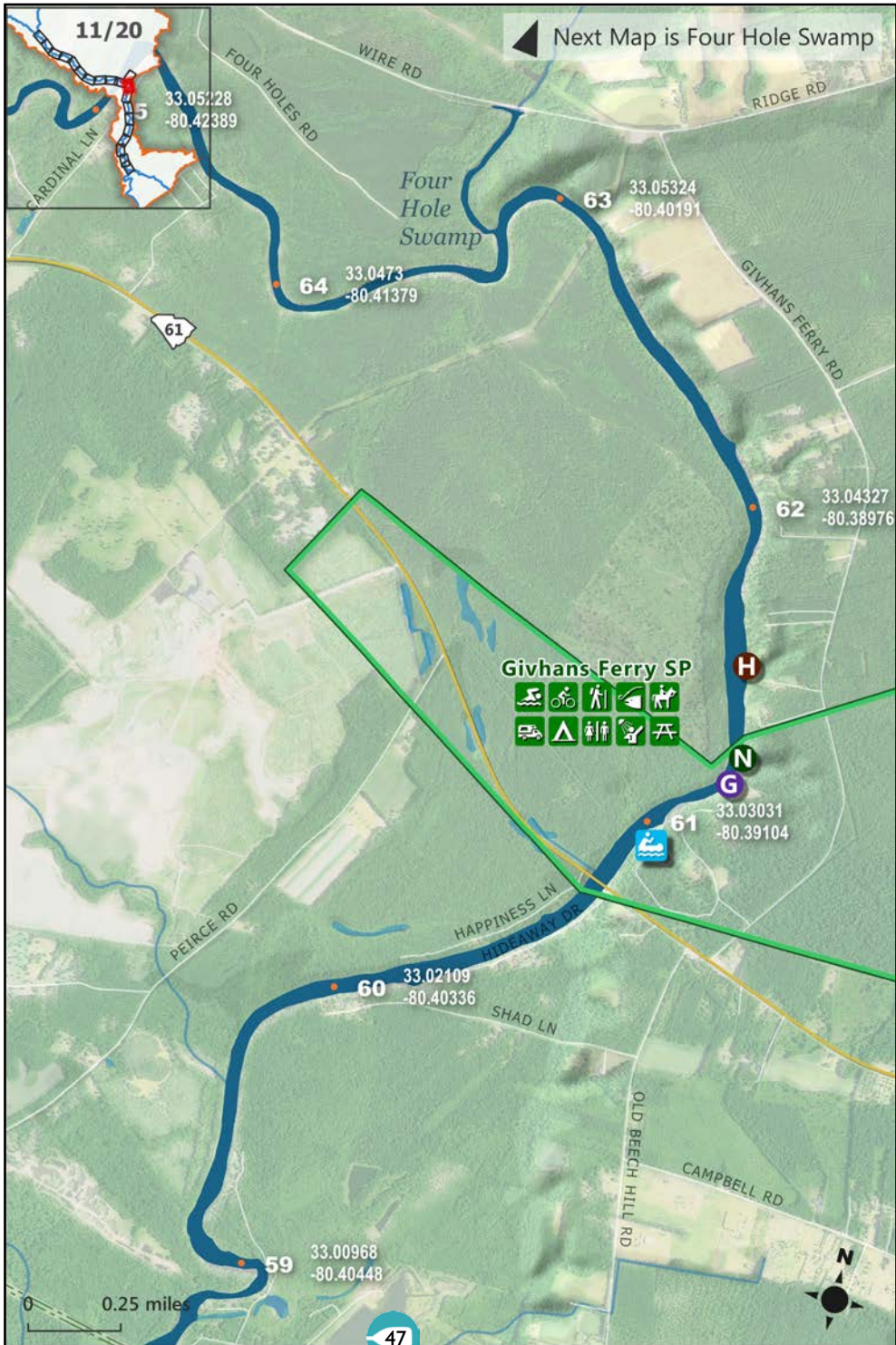
FOUR HOLES RD

WIRE RD

0 0.25 miles

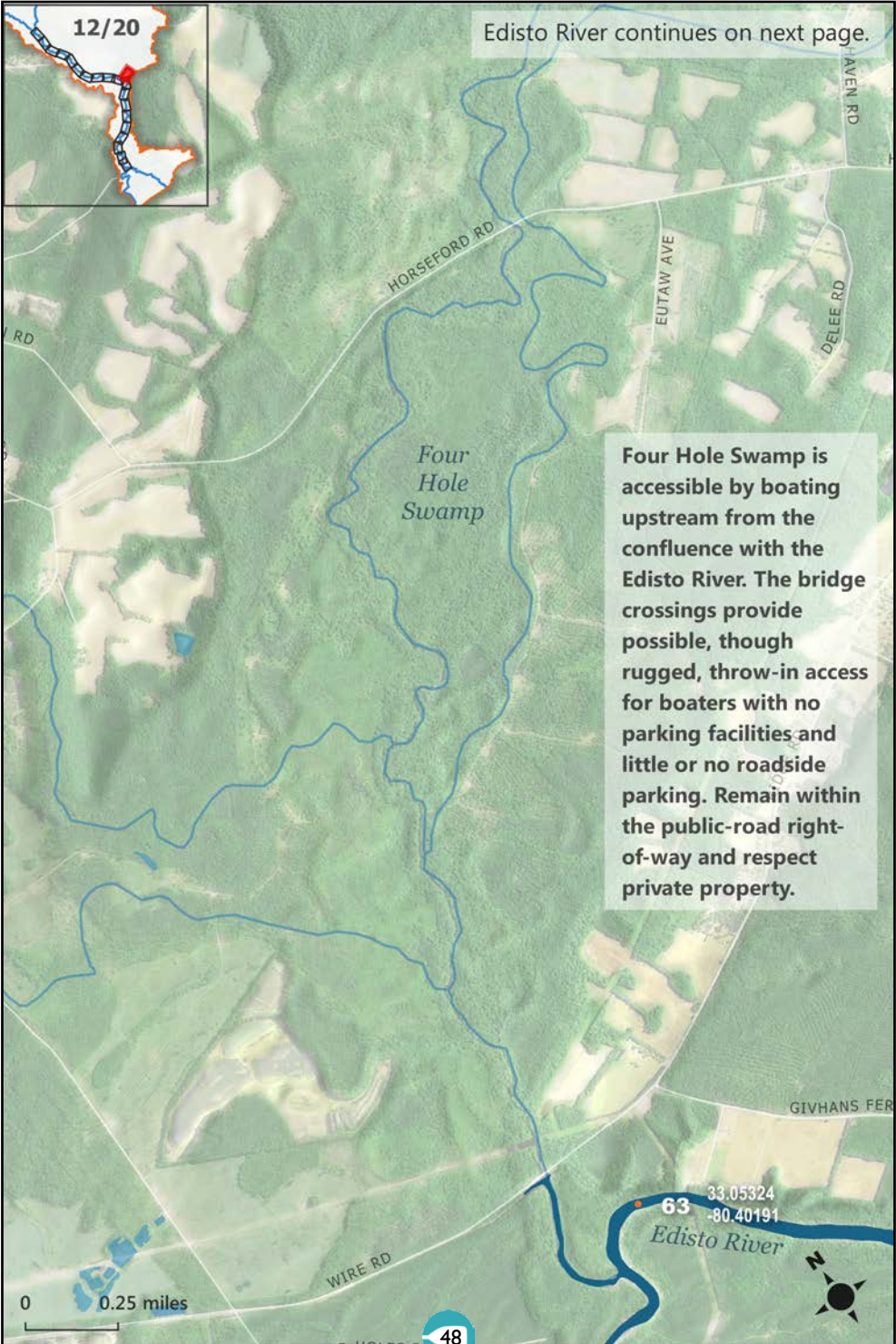


Next Map is Four Hole Swamp



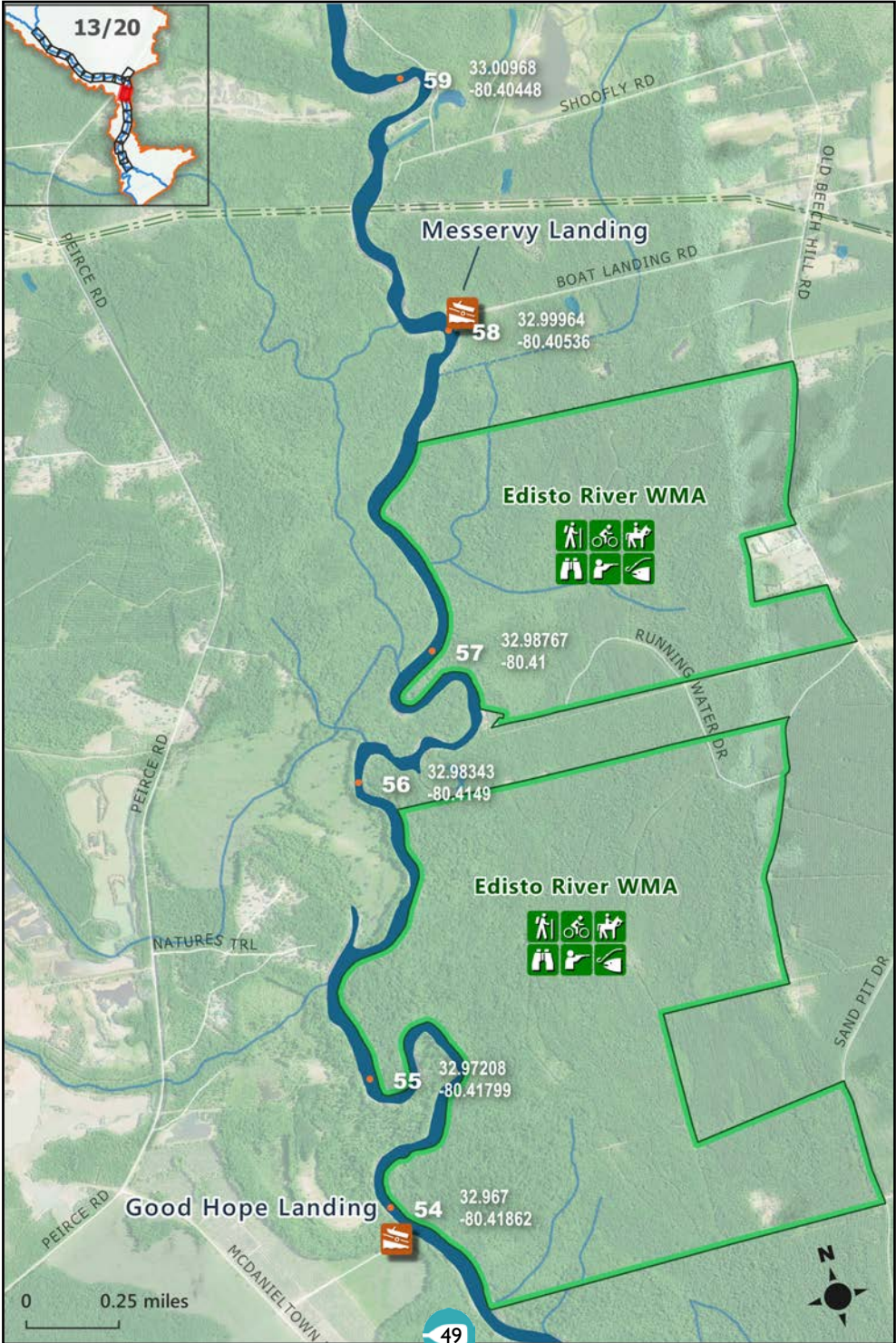
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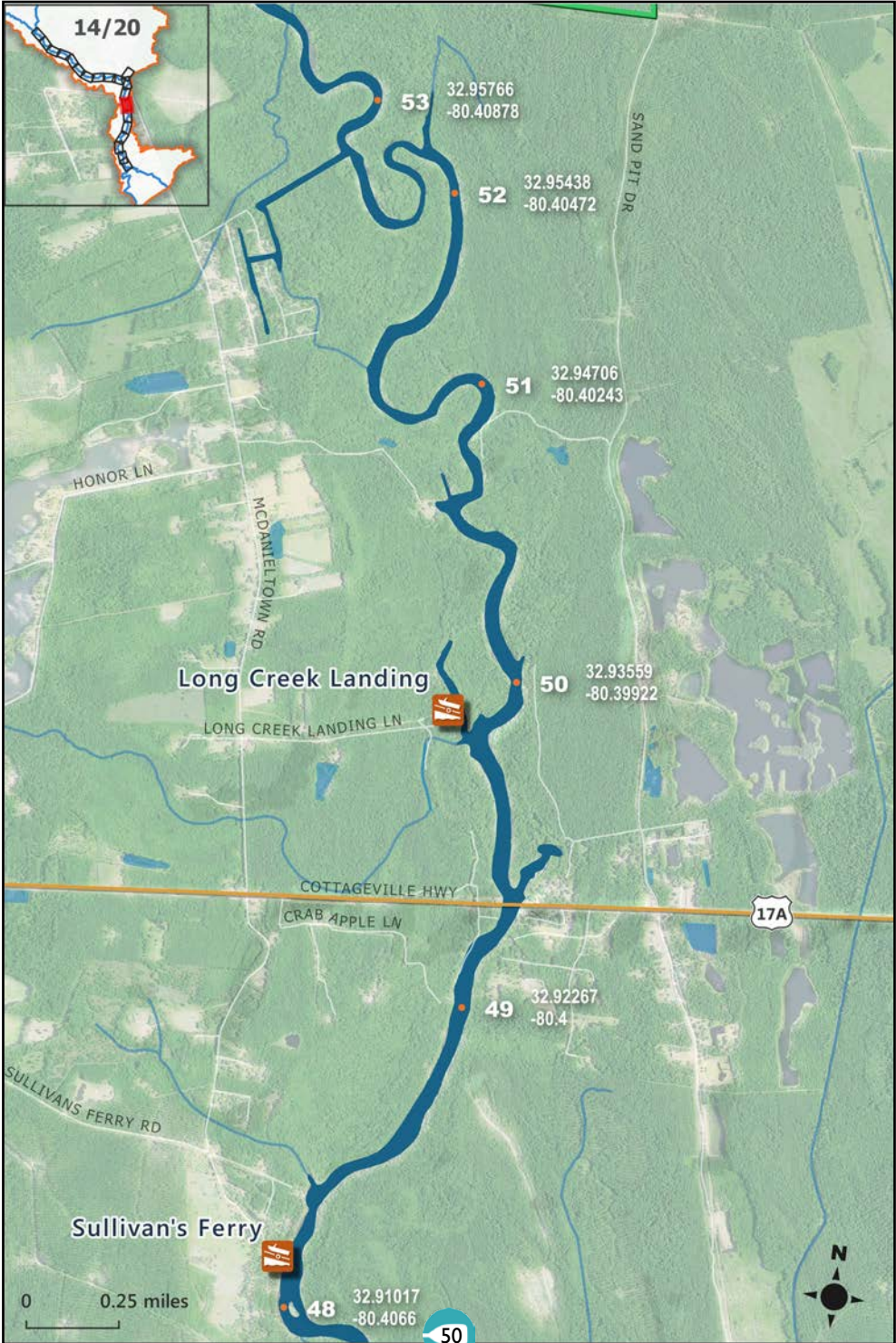
Edisto River continues on next page.



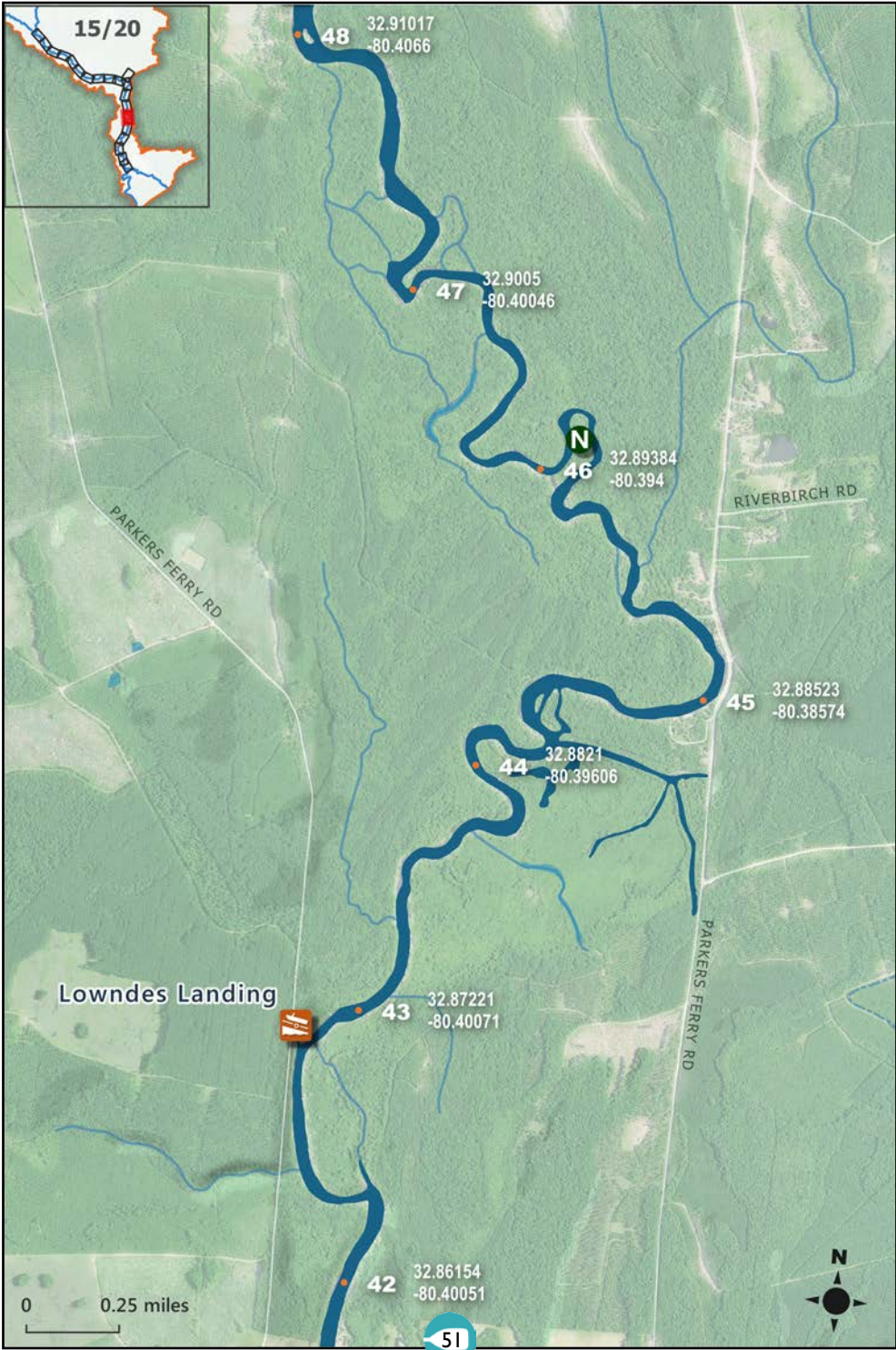
*Four
Hole
Swamp*

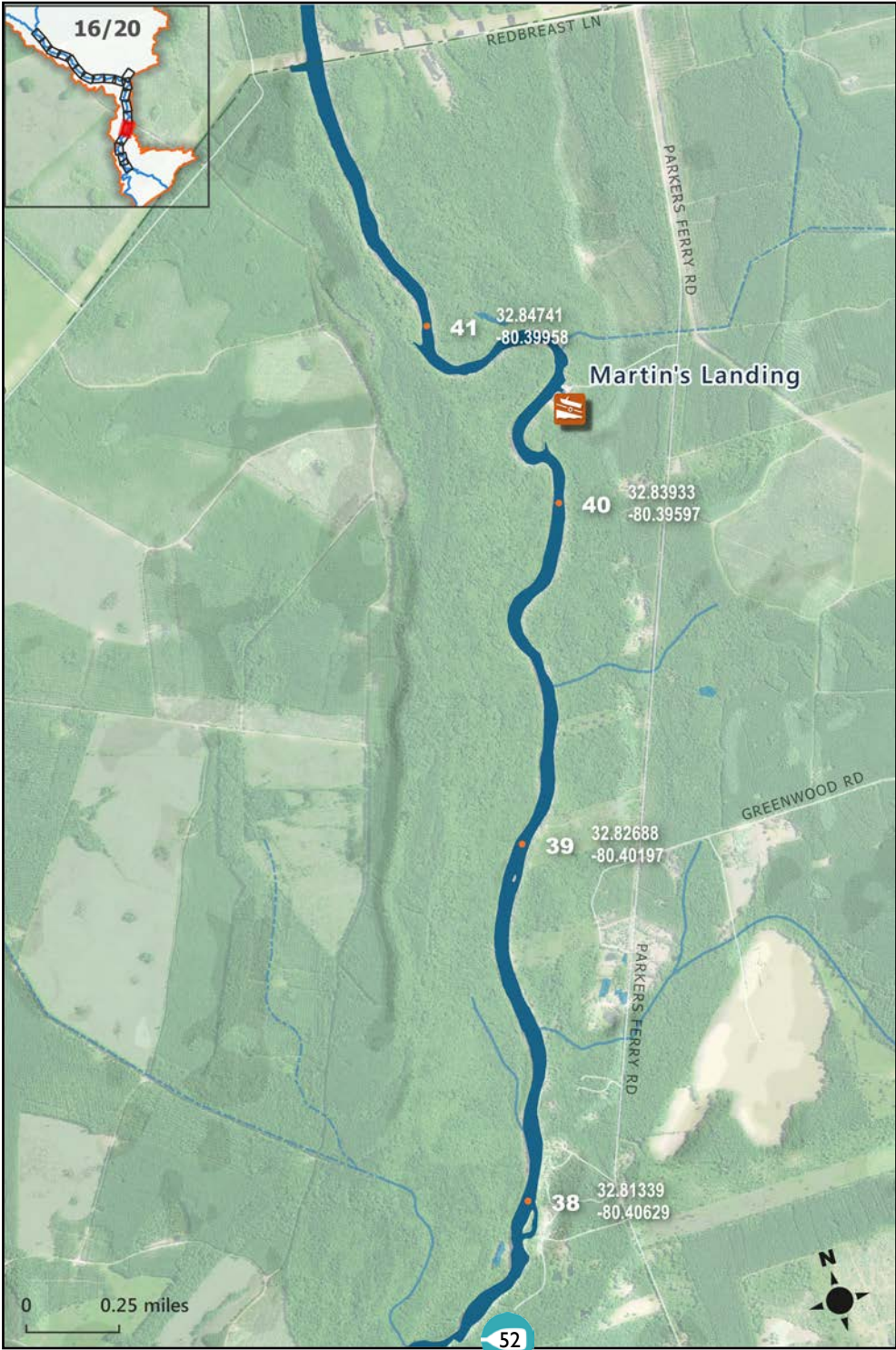
Four Hole Swamp is accessible by boating upstream from the confluence with the Edisto River. The bridge crossings provide possible, though rugged, throw-in access for boaters with no parking facilities and little or no roadside parking. Remain within the public-road right-of-way and respect private property.

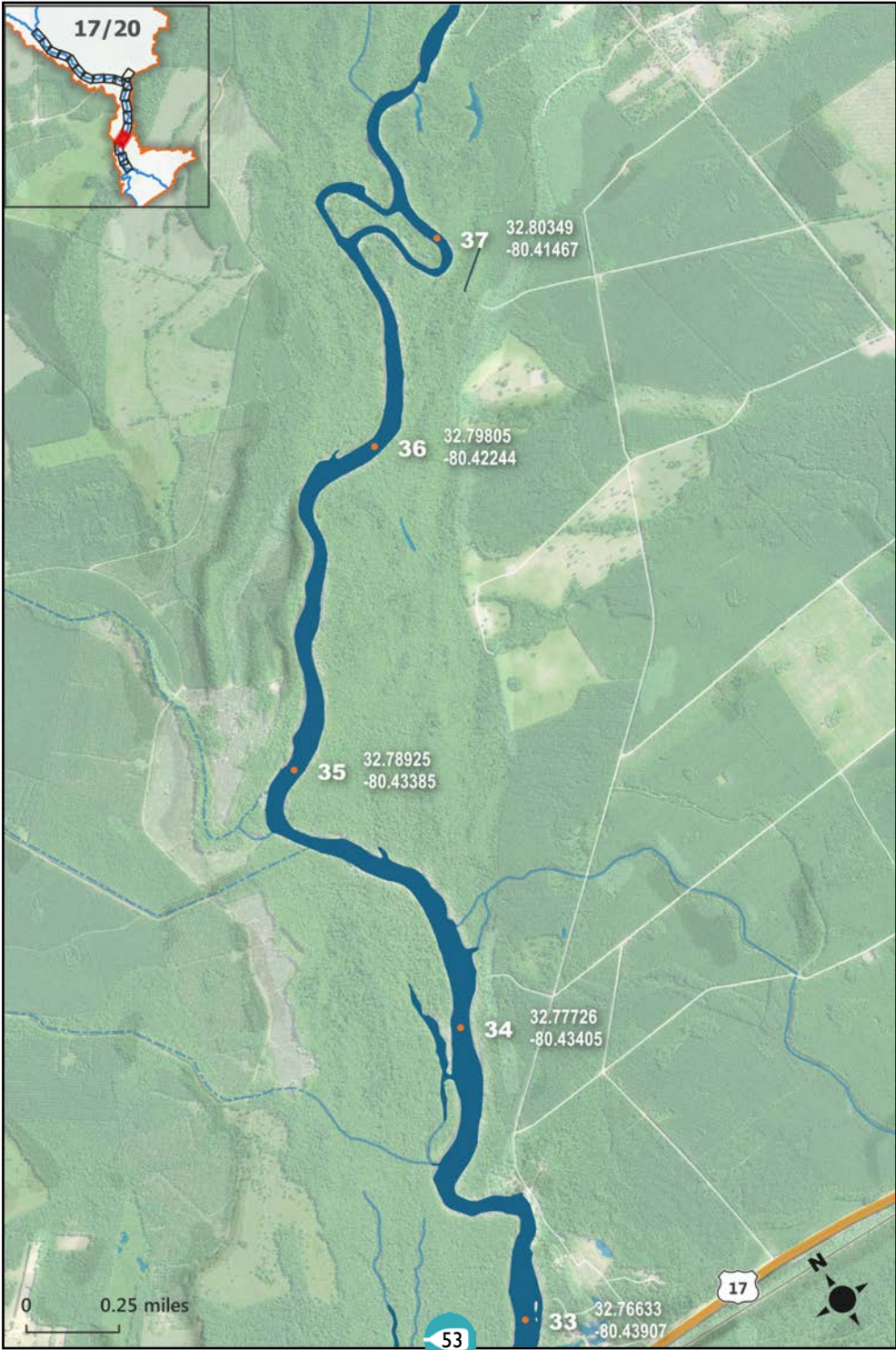
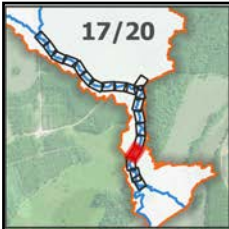


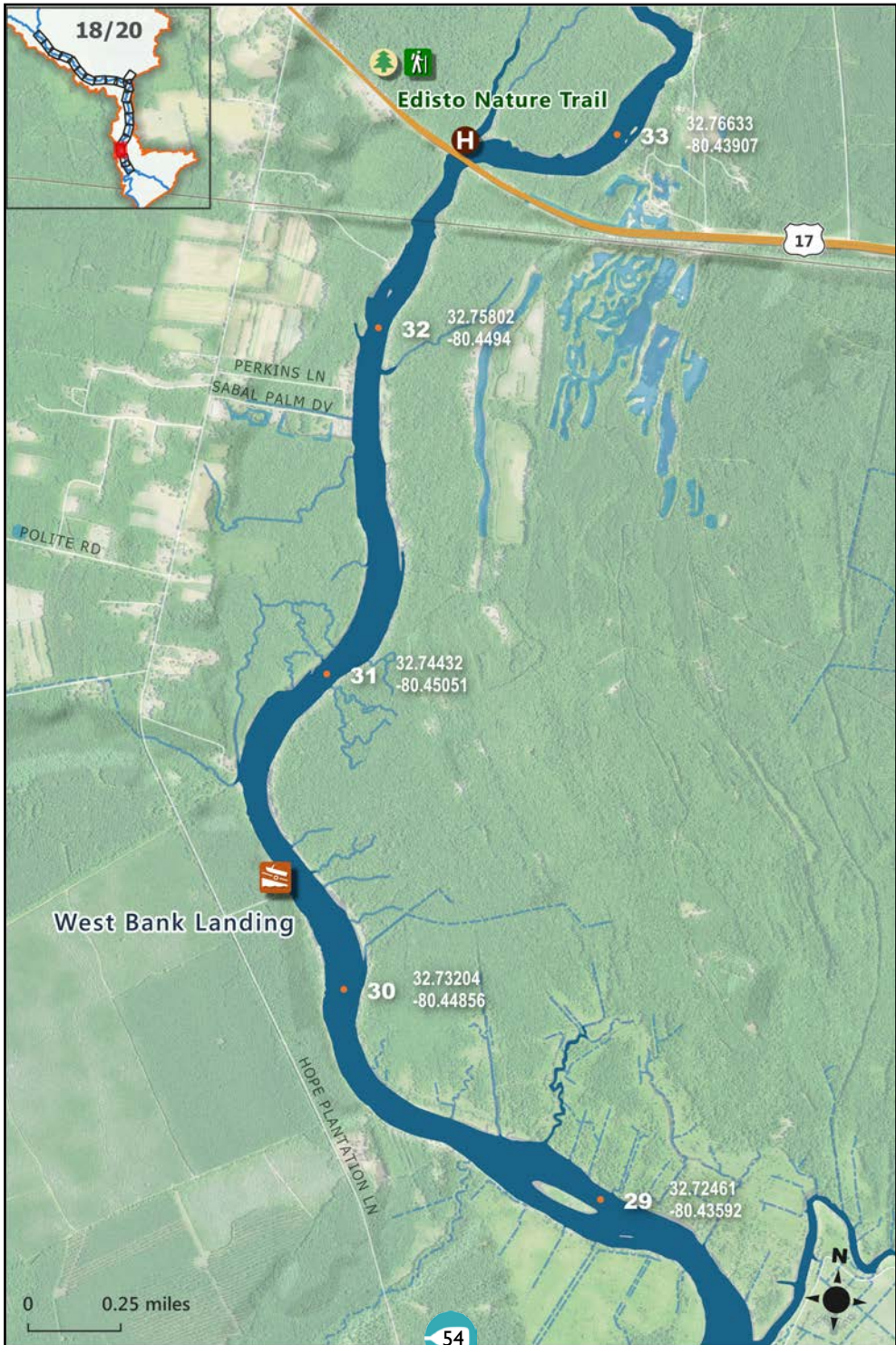


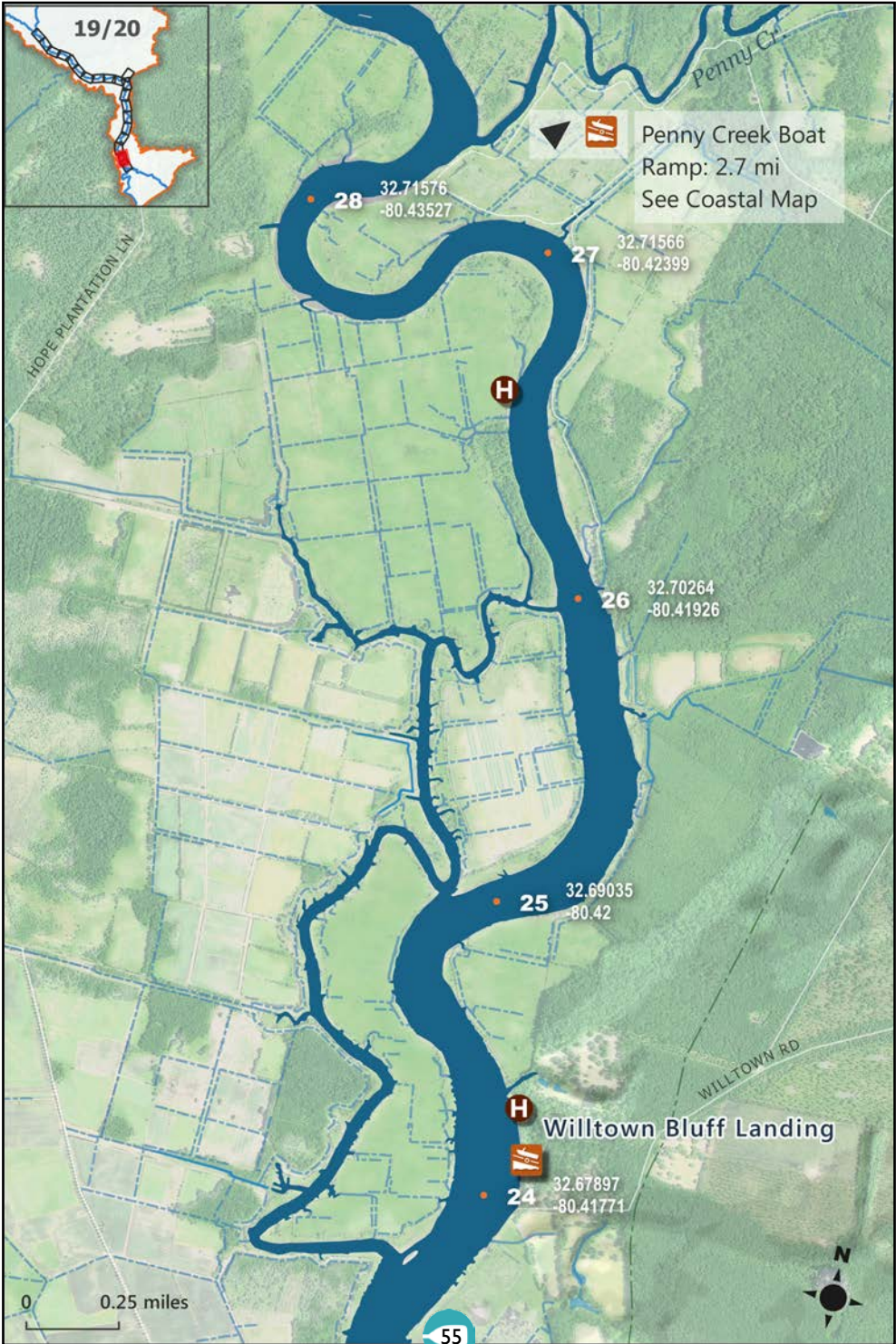
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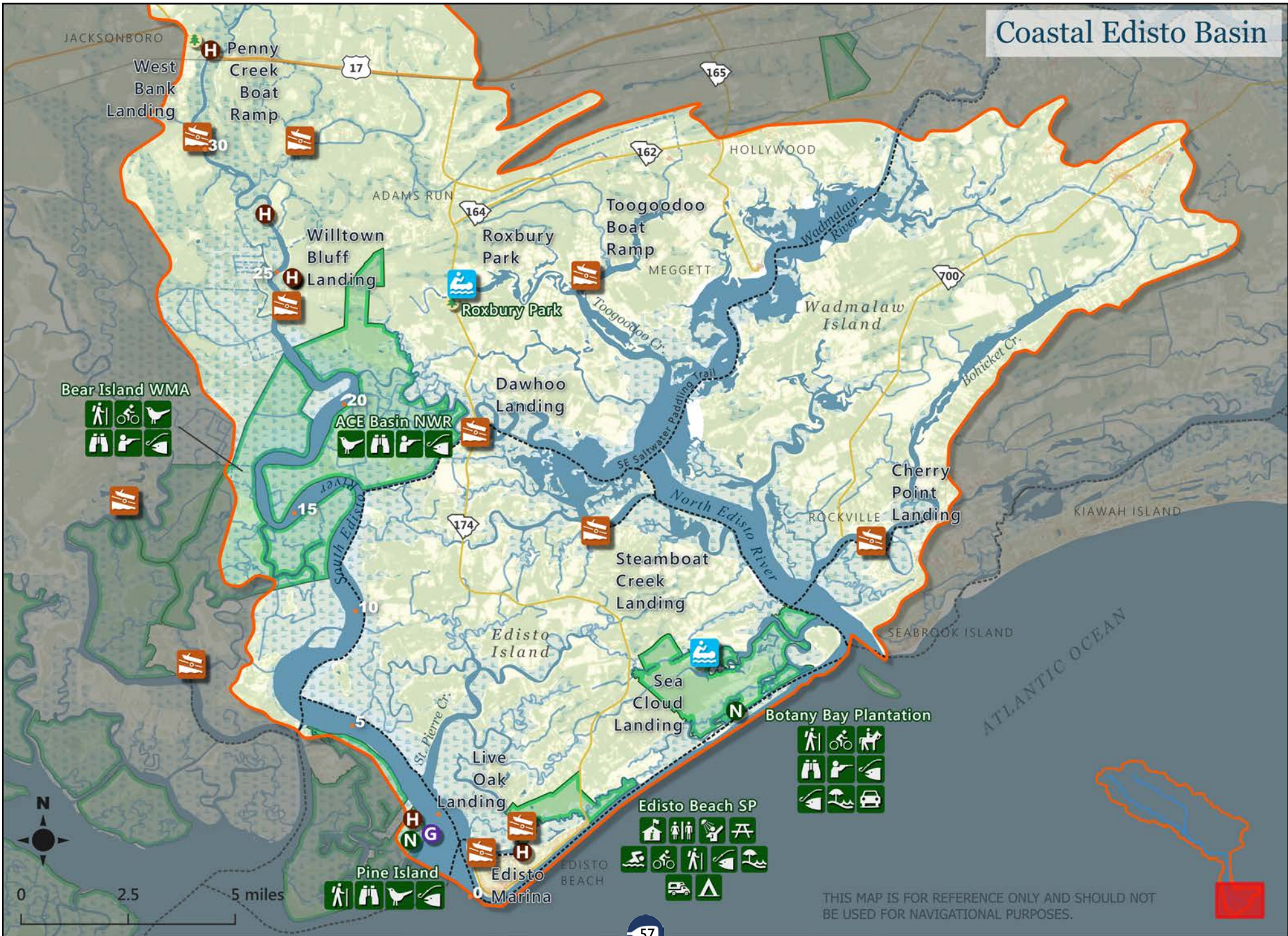




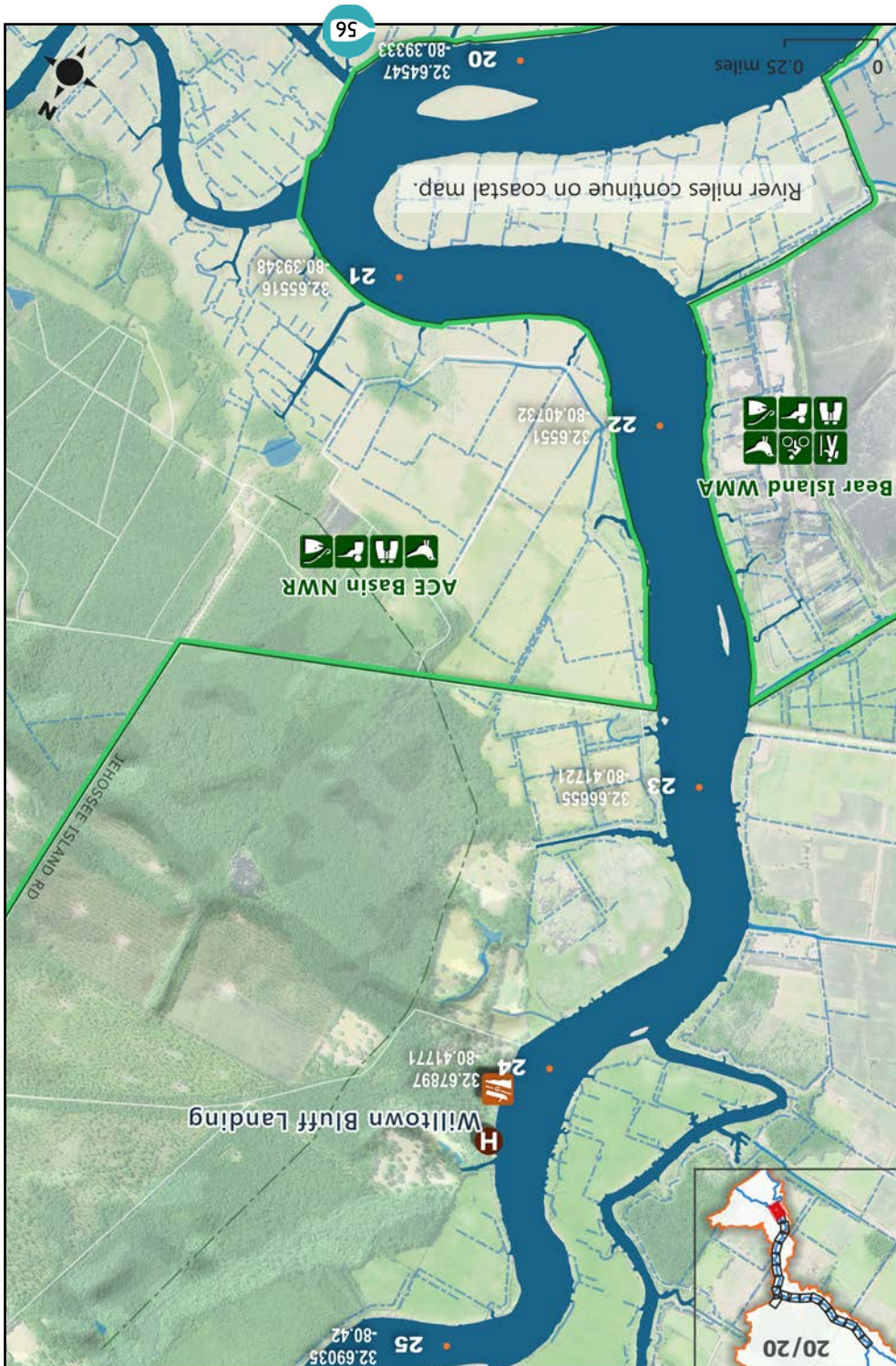




Coastal Edisto Basin



THIS MAP IS FOR REFERENCE ONLY AND SHOULD NOT BE USED FOR NAVIGATIONAL PURPOSES.



The Coastal Edisto Basin

There are numerous boating opportunities in the coastal Edisto Basin, from small tidal creeks in the salt marsh to big, open water. The interconnected, tidal waterways provide opportunities for exploring various coastal landscapes.

The coastal Edisto Basin is a part of a large coastal conservation effort known as the ACE Basin Project; ACE stands for Ashepoo, Combahee, and Edisto. The ACE Basin represents one of the largest undeveloped estuaries on the east coast of the US and is designated a National Estuarine Research Reserve. The diverse habitats include pine and hardwood uplands, forested wetlands, fresh, brackish and salt water tidal marshes, barrier islands and beaches that provide invaluable habitat for a rich diversity of marine and terrestrial wildlife. The cultural heritage of the ACE is also very rich.

The wide variety of access throughout the coastal Edisto Basin makes it easy to find a paddling adventure to suit you. The Southeast Coast Salt-water Paddling Trail - which connects Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia through tidal waterways – is routed through the basin.
















River Access Descriptions
















 Boat Ramp	 Canoe/Kayak Launch
 Fee for Use	 Roadside Parking

Notes: Most boat ramps accommodate small motor boats only.
River miles are approximate and based on best available information.














NORTH FORK EDISTO RIVER








ACCESS NAME	River Mile	Miles to Next
Poole's Mill Landing  	67.3	7.2
-81.1853, 33.6515 – From the intersection of US 178 and SC Hwy 3, take SC Hwy 3 south and go .6 mi. across bridge on left. Limited parking.		
Jones Bridge Landing  	60.1	3.8
-81.1355, 33.6069 – From US 178 and SC 394, go west on SC 394 (Salley Rd) for 1.4 mi. Landing on south side of river. Limited parking.		
Carson's Park 	56.3	7.2
-81.1052, 33.5910 – On US 321, 1.7 mi. south of North, SC and 2.8 mi north of Livingston, SC. Park is on south side of river, east of US 321.		
Slab Landing 	49.1	11.2
-81.0385, 33.5768 – From North, take US 178 east for 2.4 mi. Turn right on Slab Landing Rd and go 3.8 mi. The landing is on south side of river.		
Baughman's Landing 	37.9	9.3
-80.9472, 33.5255 – From Orangeburg, landing is on Shillings Bridge Rd on the north side of river via either US 178 or SC 4. Limited Parking.		
Orangeburg City Landing 	28.6	9.2
-80.87395, 33.48001 – South of US 301 from the Edisto Memorial Gardens. Can be accessed from Andrew Dibble St via US 301 or Glover St.		
Livingston Landing  	19.4	5.9
-80.86977, 33.40166 – From US 301/601 west of Orangeburg, take Cannon Bridge Rd south for 5.2 mi. then turn left on Livingston Landing Rd. Follow this road to the landing. Limited Parking.		
Rowe's Bridge Landing  	13.5	11.3
-80.8873, 33.35548 – From US 301/601 west of Orangeburg, take Cannon Bridge Rd south for 8.9 mi. Turn left on River Dr. The landing will be on the left before the bridge (west side of river). Limited Parking.		
Kill Kare Landing 	2.2	9.8
-80.88113, 33.28027 – From US 21 in Branchville, go west on Edward Rd for .6 mi. Turn right on Hudson Rd and go 3.3 mi. Turn left on Killkare Ln. Road ends at the landing.		

SOUTH FORK EDISTO RIVER

Highway 21 Access  	82	11.7
-81.56175, 33.63625 – New Holland Rd bridge. From I-20, take exit 33 on to SC 39. In 4.4 miles, turn right on New Holland Rd. The landing is 6.5 miles. From Aiken, take Cooks Bridge Rd east for 9 miles, then merge with New Holland Rd just before bridge. Landing on east side of river.		
Aiken State Park   	70.3	9.2
-81.48355, 33.55564 – On east side of river at State Park Rd bridge. From US 78 east of Aiken, turn left Old Tory Trl and continue 8 miles to park. Turn left on State Park Rd. Aiken SP also has a 1.7 mile canoe trail with two canoe launches in the park.		
Keadle Bridge  	61.1	3
-81.41019, 33.52013 – From SC 4 (Surrey Race Rd), turn south on Windsor Rd/Spring Branch Rd. Cross bridge, landing on left. Limited parking		
Veterans Road (Davis Bridge)  	58.1	8.6
-81.39108, 33.50272 – From SC 4 (Surrey Race Rd), turn south on Veterans Rd. Landing on right before bridge. Limited Parking.		
Highway 39  	49.5	5.6
-81.31341, 33.47836 - At the crossing of SC 39 (Springfield Rd). Ramp is on south side of river. Limited Parking.		
Hog Pen Landing 	43.9	16.3
-81.26575, 33.45523 – Just north of the river on SC 3, turn onto Pig Pen Landing Rd. Landing is at end of road, about 1 mile.		
Claude's Landing 	27.6	2.8
-81.11383, 33.38172 – From US 321 a mile south of the river crossing, turn east on Charleston Augusta Rd. After 1 mile, turn left on Claude's Landing Rd. Landing at end of road.		
Ness Bridge 	24.8	7.7
-81.08254, 33.37555 – From US 321 a mile south of the river crossing, turn east on Charleston Augusta Rd. After 2.7 miles, turn left on SC 70 (Country Club Rd). Access north side of river on right. Limited Parking.		
Bobcat Landing 	17.1	6
-81.02036, 33.33707 – Landing is at US 301/601 crossing on the south side of river and west side of highway.		
Brabham's Landing 	11.1	18.7
-80.96528, 33.31389 - From US 301 north of Bamberg, turn east onto Charleston Augusta Rd for 3.4 miles. Turn left onto Faust St. and then left on Cannon Bridge Rd. Access before bridge on left.		

EDISTO RIVER

Zig Zag Landing 	112.4	19.8
-80.84443, 33.2169 – From US 78 just west of the river crossing, take Farrell's Rd south. Make a hard left at next intersection, and go 0.5 miles. Take a right at Zig Zag Landing Rd. Landing at end of road. Landing is on oxbow lake off of the main channel. See map for route.		
Green Pond Church Landing 	92.6	2.7
-80.68968, 33.12587 - From I-95, drive Northwest on SC 61 for 3.7 miles and turn right onto Salcro Lane. Landing is at the end of the road, on an oxbow lake off of the main channel. See map for route.		
Simmons Landing (Private)  	89.9	6.1
-80.671372, 33.104028 - 1.5 miles north of I-95 on SC 61, turn right at the sign for this landing. Use pay box for fee. Respect private property.		
Weeks Landing 	83.8	8.9
-80.61307, 33.06477 - From SC 61 and US 15, drive northeast on US 15 for 1 mile and turn left just after crossing the bridge over the Edisto River.		
Colleton State Park  	83.8	8.9
-80.6133, 33.06435 – Across the river from Week's Landing (above).		
Minnie Gruber Rumph Landing – Stokes Bridge (Private) 	74.9	7.4
-80.52549, 33.06088 – From SC 61 and US 15, go east on SC 61 for 5.8 miles and turn left on to Sidneys Rd. Continue for 0.8 miles, then veer left on dirt road and continue to landing. Limited Parking. Do not block any driveways or roadways. Respect private property.		
Mars Old Field Landing 	67.5	6.5
-80.44962, 33.05479 - From SC 61 at Givhans Ferry, drive northwest for 4.8 miles and turn right Mars Oldfield Rd. Continue to landing.		
Givhans Ferry State Park  	61	3
-80.39027, 33.0305 - From Ridgeville, take SC 27 south for 6 miles and turn right onto SC 61. Go three miles, then take right on Givhans Ferry Rd.		
Messervy Landing 	58	4.1
-80.40527, 33.00016 - From SC 61 and US 17A, drive northeast on SC 61 for 8 miles and turn left onto Old Beech Hill Rd. After 1.9 miles, turn right onto Boat Landing Rd. The landing is at end of the road.		
Good Hope Landing 	53.9	4.1
-80.4178, 32.9658 - From McDanieltown Rd and US 17A, take McDanieltown Rd north for 2.8 miles. Turn right onto Good Hope Landing Rd. The landing is at the end of the road.		









Long Creek Landing 	49.8	1.7
-80.4017, 32.9342 - From McDanieltown Rd and US 17A, take McDanieltown Rd north for 0.4 miles, and turn right onto Long Creek Landing Rd. The landing is at the end of the road.		
Sullivan's Ferry 	48.1	5.3
-80.40675, 32.91213 - From Camp Buddy Rd and US 17A, drive south on Camp Buddy Rd for 1.1 miles and veer left onto Stump Knocker Rd. The landing is at the end of the road.		
Lowndes Landing 	42.8	2.4
-80.4033, 32.87078 - From US 17A and Sullivan's Ferry Rd (dirt road), 2.5 miles east of river crossing. Veer southeast on Sullivan's Ferry Rd for 1 mile and turn right onto Parkers Ferry Rd/Lowndes Landing Rd. Continue for 3.9 miles until the river and landing appear on the left.		
Martin's Landing 	40.4	10.1
-80.39454, 32.84363 – From US 17A river crossing, turn south on Sullivan's Landing Rd about 0.5 miles west of bridge. Continue for 5.8 miles (Sullivan's Landing Rd will turn into Parker Ferry Rd). Take right on Martin Landing Rd. Accessible from US 17 by turning north on Parker Ferry Rd.		
West Bank Landing 	30.3	6.3
-80.45163, 32.73626 – From US 17, turn south on Hope Plantation Ln. After 2.5 miles, make left on West Bank Landing Ln.		
Willtown Bluff Landing 	24	
-80.41621, 32.67895 – From US 17 about 3 mile east of the river crossing, turn south on Parkers Ferry Rd. Go 5 miles and then veer onto Willtown Rd. Continue to river and boat ramp. Limited Parking.		
Penny Creek Boat Ramp 	28.4	
-80.41043, 32.73482 – From US 17, head south on Parkers Ferry Rd for one mile, then take a right on Penny Creek Rd and continue to landing. Limited parking.		

FOUR HOLE SWAMP

Four Hole Swamp can be paddled upstream from the confluence with the Edisto River. In Four Hole Swamp the bridge crossings provide possible, though rugged, throw-in access for boaters. No parking facilities are available, and parking on roadsides is discouraged and prohibited at some locations. Anyone attempting to launch at a bridge crossing should remain within the public-road right-of-way and respect private property.

An upper section of Four Hole Swamp can be paddled as a guided canoe tour with Audubon South Carolina at Francis Beidler Forest.

COASTAL ACCESS

Toogoodoo Boat Ramp 	Toogoodoo Creek
-80.29628, 32.68870 – From US 17, head south on SC 174 for 4.9 miles, then turn left on to Toogoodoo Rd. After 3.5 miles, take a right onto Parishville Rd. When the road begins to turn sharply to the right, veer left to landing. Limited Parking.	
Dawhoo Landing 	Dawhoo Creek
-80.34100, 32.63573 – The road to the landing is 0.5 miles south of Dawhoo Creek off of SC 174 (Edisto Island National Scenic Byway).	
Steamboat Creek Landing 	Steamboat Creek
-80.29313, 32.60221 – From SC 174 (Edisto Island National Scenic Byway), turn north on Steamboat Landing Rd and continue to landing.	
Live Oak Landing  	Big Bay Creek
-80.32321, 32.50237 – From SC 174 (Edisto Island National Scenic Byway), turn west on to Palmetto Rd. In 1.3 miles, take a left on to Oyster Row Ln and continue to landing. Landing is in Edisto Beach State Park.	
Cherry Point Landing 	Bohicket Creek
-80.18274, 32.59801 – From SC 700 on the southern end of Wadmalaw Island, head east on Cherry Point Rd. In 1 mile, take a right to boat landing. Limited parking.	
Roxbury Park 	Toogoodoo Creek
-80.34591, 32.68594 – Only open on the weekends. Call Town of Meggett to check status. From US 17, go south on SC 174 for 5.5 miles. Just after crossing creek, entrance to park is on the left.	
Sea Cloud Landing (Botany Bay) 	Ocella Creek
-80.25005, 32.56083 – From SC 174 north of Edisto Beach, turn east on Botany Bay Rd. Take next left on Rabbit Rd. At 1.5 miles, take sharp left and continue to landing. No trailers, car-top boats only. See SCDNR website for hours and closures due to hunting.	

Parks, Preserves, and Wildlife Areas

The Edisto River and its forks have opportunities to enjoy publicly accessible lands, from State Parks to Wildlife Management Areas. The areas described below are also shown on the maps.

NORTH FORK EDISTO RIVER

Edisto Memorial Gardens in Orangeburg – Located at the site of a Civil War standoff, the park features manicured gardens and natural areas along the North Fork Edisto River. Boaters can access the gardens via a dock and gazebo.

Orangeburg National Fish Hatchery – Operated by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the hatchery’s two facilities near Orangeburg are open to public for education and outdoor recreation opportunities.

SOUTH FORK EDISTO RIVER

Aiken State Park – Aiken State Park was built by an African American detachment of the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression. Offers a 1.7 mile cleared canoe and kayak trail and camping opportunities for paddlers.

Aiken Gopher Tortoise Heritage Preserve - This SCDNR preserve is home to the rare and state-listed endangered gopher tortoise and a longleaf pine/wiregrass community that is one of the most endangered in the Southeast.

EDISTO RIVER

McAlhany Nature Preserve – This preserve is managed by the Charleston chapter of the Audubon Society. Includes a diverse array of habitats; from 1.5 miles of frontage on the Edisto River, a large oxbow lake, and upland bluff ecosystems.

Colleton State Park – Colleton State Park offers access to the Edisto River for paddling, swimming, and fishing. Developed picnic and camping facilities are available. Connected to Givhans Ferry State Park 21 miles downstream via the Edisto River Canoe and Kayak Trail.

Givhans Ferry State Park – Givhans Ferry State Park offers access to the Edisto River for paddling, swimming, and fishing. Developed picnic and camping facilities are available. Connected to Colleton State Park 21 miles upstream via the Edisto River Canoe and Kayak Trail.

Edisto River Wildlife Management Area – Bottomland hardwood and loblolly environments managed by the SCDNR for public recreational access and public hunting.

FOUR HOLE SWAMP

Francis Beidler Forest – The forest’s 17,000 acres protect the largest virgin cypress-tupelo swamp forest in the world, along with other bottomland and swamp environments. Interpretive center, boardwalk, and guided walks and canoe tours provide access to the forest.

COASTAL

Bear Island Wildlife Management Area – Bear Island is managed by the SCDNR to provide quality habitat for wintering waterfowl and wetland wildlife, including endangered wood storks and bald eagles. Popular for birdwatching and waterfowl hunting.

ACE Basin National Wildlife Refuge – This refuge protects just under 12,000 acres of estuarine and low-country environments in the largest undeveloped estuary along the Atlantic Coast. The property is managed for both game and non-game species.

Edisto Beach State Park – This oceanfront state park, rich in Native American history, provides camping and lodging, beach access and educational opportunities in beach or maritime forest environments.

Botany Bay Plantation – This SCDNR property preserves both natural and historic landscapes. A driving tour is the most popular way to see the property, and a board walk leads you to an undeveloped beach.

Roxbury Park – This park is owned by the Town of Meggett, SC. It offers an opportunity to explore the diverse ecosystems of coastal South Carolina. A cabin is available for rent on the property.

Town of Edisto Island Parks – The Town of Edisto Island has three parks, including Bay Creek Park, which is on Big Bay Creek.

Pine Island – As part of the larger ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve, this undeveloped island includes beach, coastal sand dunes, and maritime forest hammocks. It can be accessed by boat from landings on Big Bay Creek.

Natural History

GEOLOGY

The rivers of the Edisto Basin stretch across the entire Coastal Plain, crossing 100 million years of geologic history as it winds toward the coast. Periods of rising and lowering sea levels deposited the layers of sediments that divide the Coastal Plain into three sections: the upper, middle, and lower Coastal Plain. These sediments were deposited on top of even older rocks.

The headwater streams of the Edisto begin at the fall line, which is the transition between the hard-rock Piedmont and the layered sediments of the Coastal Plain. The upper-most tributaries flow over rocky shoals in this geologic transition before meandering through the coastal plain. Groundwater sources in the Sandhills region of the upper coastal plain provide sustaining, year round flow.

As you paddle down the Edisto, the most visible geologic features are the floodplain landscapes. The floodplain is the area adjacent to the river that regularly experiences flooding. Rivers are constantly changing the landscape as they wind through the floodplain. They

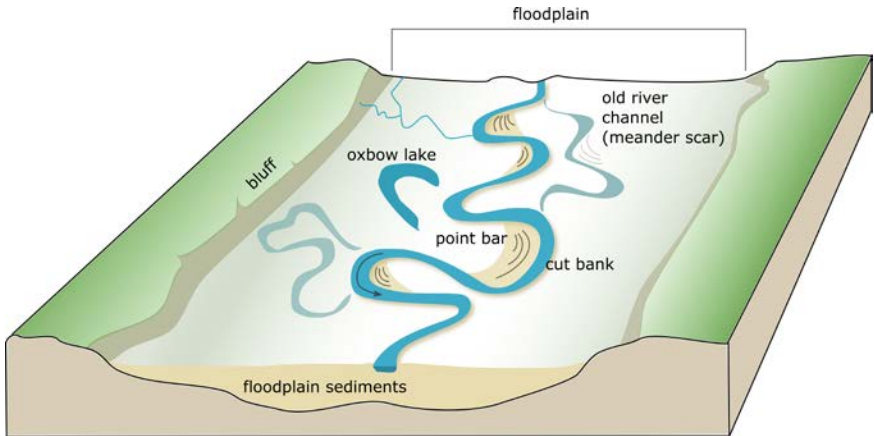


Illustration of a floodplain landscape.

erode sediments in some places, while depositing sediments in others, creating a dynamic landscape and ecosystem.

You can see the sandy point bars—where sediment is being deposited—and cut banks, where the sediment is being eroded. Features such as oxbow lakes and swampy old stream channels (often called sloughs or guts) cover the floodplain. These are meander scars, formed as the river shifted course over thousands of years. The ecosystem of the floodplain is directly related to this topography of swampy lowlands and dry uplands.

Halfway down the main stem of the Edisto, the river takes a sharp turn south as it flows against a tall bluff with an exposure of limestone and marl at Givhans Ferry State Park. Marl is similar to limestone, but contains clay as well as calcium carbonate. These fossil-filled sedimentary rocks are most prominent at this location, but other outcrops are visible along the river.

As you move closer to the coast, the Edisto River continues to widen and is surrounded by large wetlands and freshwater marshes. The Edisto then splits into multiple tidal channels that flow between active salt marshes filled with mucky sediments known as ‘pluff mud’ and sandy inactive beach ridges. The shorelines in the coastal Edisto are very active; the barrier island beaches have eroded drastically in some places such as Botany Bay’s boneyard beach.

Geologic Points of Interest

- Oldest Sediments in Basin – Page 21 [-81.55835, 33.63385] – The bluffs on either side of the floodplain are made up of Upper Cretaceous sediments, at least 66 million years old.

- Oxbow Lakes - Page 38 [-80.84102, 33.21939] – Zig Zag Landing is located on a series of oxbow lakes that connect to the Edisto River.

- Paleo Sand Dunes - Page 38 [-80.81934, 33.20234] – The river abuts a large, steep bluff of paleo sand dunes. They were active under different climate conditions around 500,000 years ago.



Aerial image of an oxbow lake.

- Oxbow Lake – Page 41 [-80.69878, 33.14529] – This large oxbow lake is accessible by boat at high water on the most downstream end. The lake is within McAlhaney Nature Preserve.
- Marl Outcrop – Page 47 [-80.38808, 33.03217] – The bluffs on the east bank of the river have exposed marl outcrops. Fossils are sometimes visible in the exposures.
- Other marl outcrops are visible depending on water levels. They may be seen near:
 - S. Fork – Page 34 [-80.94746, 33.30461]
 - Edisto River – Page 40 [-80.74681, 33.17569]
 - Edisto River – Page 40 [-80.71396, 33.15797]
 - Edisto River – Page 45 [-80.51563, 33.05915]
- Pine Island Coastal Geology – Page 57 [-80.36000, 32.49957] – When boating across the South Edisto River to Pine Island, you will cross large sand bars formed by coastal currents. The island’s salt marsh platform, hammock islands, old beach ridges, and beaches show off the geology typical of coastal South Carolina.

SCDNR conducts geologic, hydrologic and coastal research in the Edisto Basin to provide scientific information to decision makers and the public. For more information, visit the SCDNR and SC Geological Survey websites.

FLORA AND FAUNA

As you paddle along the Edisto’s waterways, you will pass by different river environments, which host a variety of plant and animal species.

Vegetation

Common vegetation communities you will see on inland river sections include floodplain cypress-tupelo swamps in oxbow lakes and sloughs, bottomland hardwood forests, and sand ridge or bluff uplands. Bald cypress - tupelo gum forests fill low-lying swamp areas along the river. Stretches



Bald Cypress - tupelo gum forest with a dwarf palmetto in the foreground.

of oak and cypress can be draped by Spanish moss. Other tree species along the bank include sweetgum, red maple and green ash. Some of the sandy ridges and bluffs will include loblolly pine and live oaks. River birch and black willow lean over the river from sandy point bars. Other noticeable trees include dwarf palmetto in the understory and the occasional southern magnolia tree.

As you move into the coastal Edisto Basin, new ecosystems emerge. The tidal rivers and creeks present a transition in vegetation from freshwater to saltwater environments and include the expansion of tidal marshes adjacent to the river channels. Saltmarsh, dominated by smooth cordgrass, extends over large areas at the coast. The forest community along barrier islands and shores near the coast is a maritime forest, of which most trees are evergreen including live oak, loblolly pine, laurel oak and American holly. Small pockets of island maritime forest called hammocks are often surrounded by marsh. Coastal sand dunes are shaped by the vegetation, such as sea oats, as they create wind breaks that contribute to the accumulation of sand.

Birds

You can spot hundreds of different birds while floating the Edisto. Common birds of prey include osprey, hawks, and bald eagles. Barred owls are often heard in the evening and night, and less often seen. During the late spring and



Swallowtailed kite

summer you may see Mississippi kites or possibly a swallow-tailed kite swoop and glide in the sky. You will likely be sharing the water with wading birds such as egrets, herons, belted kingfishers, and ibis. In the spring and summer you may see cormorants diving under the water. Many songbirds and woodpeckers will be heard, and some seen, in the forests along the river, and these include the brilliant yellow and melodious prothonotary warbler and the striking pileated woodpecker.



Prothonotary warbler

The Edisto Basin has populations of nationally threatened and endangered bird species including the red-cockaded woodpecker, which lives in the upland longleaf pine woodlands, and the wood stork, which nests in lowland, forested wetlands.

The Edisto Basin is important to both resident and migratory waterfowl, including wood ducks, mallards, widgeon, gadwall and teal. Wild turkey, dove, and bobwhite quail are the popular upland gamebirds of the basin.

Other Wildlife

Alligators are common in the basin but they are shy and prefer to avoid any boaters. Non-venomous water snakes and the venomous water moccasin call the river home. Brown water snakes are the ones most commonly seen and occasionally water moccasins are found curled up in the sun on a log or clump of grass just above the water. Other venomous snakes found in drier, upland areas include copperheads, rattlesnakes, and coral snakes. While the majority of snakes in South Carolina are non-venomous, be alert to where you step when exiting your boat.

There are two threatened reptiles that call the Edisto Basin home: the gopher tortoise and loggerhead sea turtle. The gopher tortoise's most suitable



A gopher tortoise in its burrow.

habitat is the longleaf pine ecosystem of the upper basin, where it can easily burrow into the sandy soils. The loggerhead comes ashore on the barrier islands in the coastal Edisto Basin to lay eggs in May through October of each year.

Wasps and hornets are a potential wildlife hazard that is often overlooked. They will build nests in trees that overhang the river, so keep an eye out when floating under those low hanging branches!

Fish

A total of 87 freshwater species and 120 saltwater species of fish have been collected and identified from the Edisto Basin. The free-flowing Edisto River provides habitats for notable fish species such as the anadromous striped bass, American shad, shortnose sturgeon, Atlantic sturgeon, and American eel.

Freshwater fish species directly targeted by anglers include largemouth bass, striped bass, redbreast sunfish, and black crappie. Other fish often caught are bluegill, redear sunfish, and warmouth, and several catfish species including: blue, channel, flathead, and flat and yellow bullheads. Redbreast sunfish are still being sought, but bluegill sunfish are increasing as the dominant species harvested. Inshore-saltwater fishing favorites include red drum (aka spottail bass, redfish, or channel bass), flounder, spotted seatrout (aka speckled trout), and whiting.



American shad



Atlantic sturgeon

Hunting and Fishing

There are hunting opportunities on public lands in the Edisto basin. Typical game species include deer, turkey, dove, quail, waterfowl, feral hogs, and other small game. Fishing opportunities extend to all waters of the Edisto River system and the popular species are described above. See the SCDNR website for more information and regulations on hunting, hunting on public lands, and fishing in freshwater and saltwater

Natural Points of Interest

- Aiken Gopher Tortoise HP – Page 25 [-81.40563, 33.50759] – This Heritage Preserve protects the longleaf pine and wiregrass ecosystem, which is important for the gopher tortoise.
- Bald Cypress-Tupelo Gum Swamps – Paddling through oxbow lakes and secondary channels provides a good opportunity to view this wetland forest environment. A few opportunities can be found near:

- N. Fork - Page 12 [-80.98481, 33.54976]
- Edisto River - Page 38 [-80.83920, 33.21728]
- Edisto River - Page 51 [-80.39237, 32.89364]
- Calcareous Forest Community – Page 47 [-80.38769, 33.03356] – Calcium from the limestone bluffs promotes a unique and diverse forest community.
- Loggerhead Sea Turtle Nesting – Page 57 [-80.23743, 32.54086] – Loggerhead sea turtles come on shore to nest on the beaches of Edisto Island every summer.
- Pine Island Hammocks – Page 57 [-80.36397, 32.50495] – Pine Island has hammock islands that support maritime forest and shrub communities, which are surrounded by marsh.

The SCDNR researches and manages wildlife and ecological resources in the Edisto Basin, from game species to rare plants and animals, through programs in the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, the Heritage Trust Program, and the Marine Resources Division. The SCDNR is a leading partner of the ACE Basin project and the associated National Estuarine Research Reserve. These projects combine research, education, and resource management to promote the conservation of one of South Carolina’s most important coastal landscapes. To find out more, visit the SCDNR website at www.dnr.sc.gov.

Human History

Many of South Carolina’s rivers are named after their original Native American residents, including the Edisto, which provided resources to people for at least 10,000 years.

Native Americans at the coast traded with other tribes that lived inland. They made trails through the basin, connecting the coast to inland areas. These same trails would be used by Europeans for their own routes inland. An example of this is the Orangeburg Road (on 1779 map of SC) which followed a prior Native American route.

A shell midden at Edisto Beach State Park called Spanish Mount Point gives archaeologists a look into the lives of Native Americans. Unfortunately, this archaeological site, like many others along the coast, are threatened by shoreline erosion. It is important that archaeologists study these coastal sites before they disappear.

As Europeans arrived at the coast, they looked to move inland and use the Edisto River for farming and transportation. With its location between settlements of Native American tribes; as well as the British,

Spanish and French, who were competing for control over North America, the basin was an area of conflict. The Yamasee War (1715-1717), a conflict between the British and Native Americans, occurred across the area. The Revolutionary and Civil Wars also left their marks in the area.



Spanish Mount Pointe shell mound.

The British established forts along the Edisto River because of its key location as a back door route to Charles Towne (now Charleston). One fort was established at Edisto Bluff, on the east bank of the Edisto River near present-day Givhans Ferry, which has been an important crossing on the Edisto River throughout history.

The basin's location between densely populated towns like Charleston and Augusta kept the population in the basin low. However, agricultural plantations were established and their success was made possible by slave labor. Bottomland hardwood forests were cleared and converted to rice fields where water levels were controlled by man-made canals and dikes. Indigo was a major crop in the uplands of plantations until the invention of the cotton gin, when cotton replaced indigo in importance.

Routes through the Edisto were important in connecting inland goods like cotton to the coast. A major railroad was completed in 1833, connecting Charleston to the Savannah River. At the time, it was the longest railroad in the world. Small railroad towns popped up along the route which remain today, including St. George, Branchville, Denmark and Aiken.



Rice plantation landscape along the Edisto River.

After the Civil War, the plantation system declined and sharecropping led to dispersed settlements. Cotton remained an important crop

through World War I, but soon thereafter prosperity and cotton farming collapsed with the Great Depression. During this time, coastal plantations were bought by wealthy northerners and used for recreational retreats. This helped keep the Edisto basin undeveloped, especially at the coast. Much of the farmland was left to convert back to forests. After World War II, manufacturing grew and farmers began to grow crops other than cotton, raised more livestock and produced more timber products.

Historical Points of Interest 🏠

- Aiken State Park – Page 23 [-81.48476, 33.55266] – This park was built during the Great Depression by an African American detachment of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).
- Holman’s Toll Bridge – Page 30 [-81.15514, 33.40429] – A toll bridge was built in 1801. The toll ranged from 50 cents for wagons and teams to 3 cents per head of livestock.
- Edisto Memorial Gardens – Page 15 [-80.57350, 33.48761] – Confederate soldiers halted a union army advance at the river.
- Railroad Trestle – Page 37 [-80.88491, 33.26038] – This railroad trestle is on the route of the South Carolina Railroad, completed in 1833. This section of the railroad is no longer in use. A railroad bridge is just upstream around the bend.
- Parker’s Ferry Earthworks – Page 54 [-80.44607, 33.76564] – Key location on the Edisto River. The bridge was burned by Native Americans during the Yamasee War, and patriot earthworks were built to protect the ferry from during the Revolutionary War.
- Rice field remnants – Page 53 [-80.42463, 33.71005] – The canals, dikes, and wetlands are the remnants of rice cultivation on large plantations. Today, the wetlands are important wildlife habitat.
- Willtown Bluff – Page 56 [-80.41638, 32.68030] – One of South Carolina’s earliest planned towns, and was an important location for protection and trade throughout early South Carolina history.
- Spanish Mount Point – Page 57 [-80.32311, 32.49358] – The shell midden dates to 1800 – 2000 BC. Access via Edisto Beach State Park.

The South Carolina Heritage Trust works to protect South Carolina’s cultural heritage through protection of important archaeological sites and public education programs across the state. To find a Heritage Preserve near you, visit the SCDNR website at www.dnr.sc.gov.

Partners & Acknowledgements

SCDNR Scenic Rivers Program



The Scenic Rivers Program promotes conservation of South Carolina's river heritage and the protection of unique or outstanding scenic, recreational, geologic, botanical, fish, wildlife, historic and cultural values of selected rivers and river segments of the state.

www.dnr.sc.gov/water/river

The Harry Hampton Memorial Wildlife Fund



The Harry Hampton Memorial Wildlife Fund, Inc. is a private, non-profit corporation which partners with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources for the promotion of education, research, management and the administration of game and fish laws, which will benefit conservation of wildlife, marine and other natural resources in South Carolina.

www.HamptonWildlifeFund.org

Friends of the Edisto



Friends of the Edisto, Inc. (FRED) is a non-profit organization established in 1998 to facilitate conservation of natural resources and encourage sustainable economic development within the Edisto River Basin. The mission of FRED is to protect and enhance the natural and cultural character and resources of the Edisto River Basin through conservation and responsible use. www.EdistoFriends.org

Edisto River Canoe and Kayak Commission



The Edisto River Canoe and Kayak Trail Commission (ERCK) was established for the development, preservation and protection of the Edisto River. This is achieved through leading guided paddles, maintaining the navigability of the river, teaching river safety and raising public awareness of this valuable blueway through festivals, public relations, and paddling instruction. www.ERCKtrail.org

Paddle SC



Paddle SC is a statewide coalition working to improve access to blueways – or paddle trails – throughout South Carolina. Find waterway access and paddling experiences across the state at GoPaddleSC.com.

Paddle SC

Guidebook maps and contents were designed by Tanner Arrington, GIS Manager of SCDNR's Land, Water, and Conservation Division, with the guidance of Bill Marshall, River Conservation Program Manager of SCDNR. Mark Conrardy, with the SCDNR Outreach and Support Services graphics team, formatted and designed the book for printing.

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Cover photograph is by Larry Price. Swallow-tailed kite by Andy Morffew; Creative Commons (CC BY 2.0). Prothonotary warbler – USFWS/James Kawlewski; Creative Commons (CC BY 2.0), Gopher tortoises – David Lucas SCDNR. Other photographs are courtesy of SCDNR, Jon Grubb, and Tanner Arrington.

GIS data used in the maps were acquired from: USGS – National Hydrography Dataset, National Land Cover Database; US Census Bureau – US primary roads; SCDNR – elevation data, roads, public lands, boat ramps; USDA – NAIP Aerial Imagery.

The basemap used for the corridor maps was created using a method described here: Raposo, P., Brewer, C. A., Sparks, K. (2016). An Impressionistic Cartographic Solution for Base Map Land Cover with Coarse Pixel Data. *Cartographic Perspectives*. 83, 5-21.



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