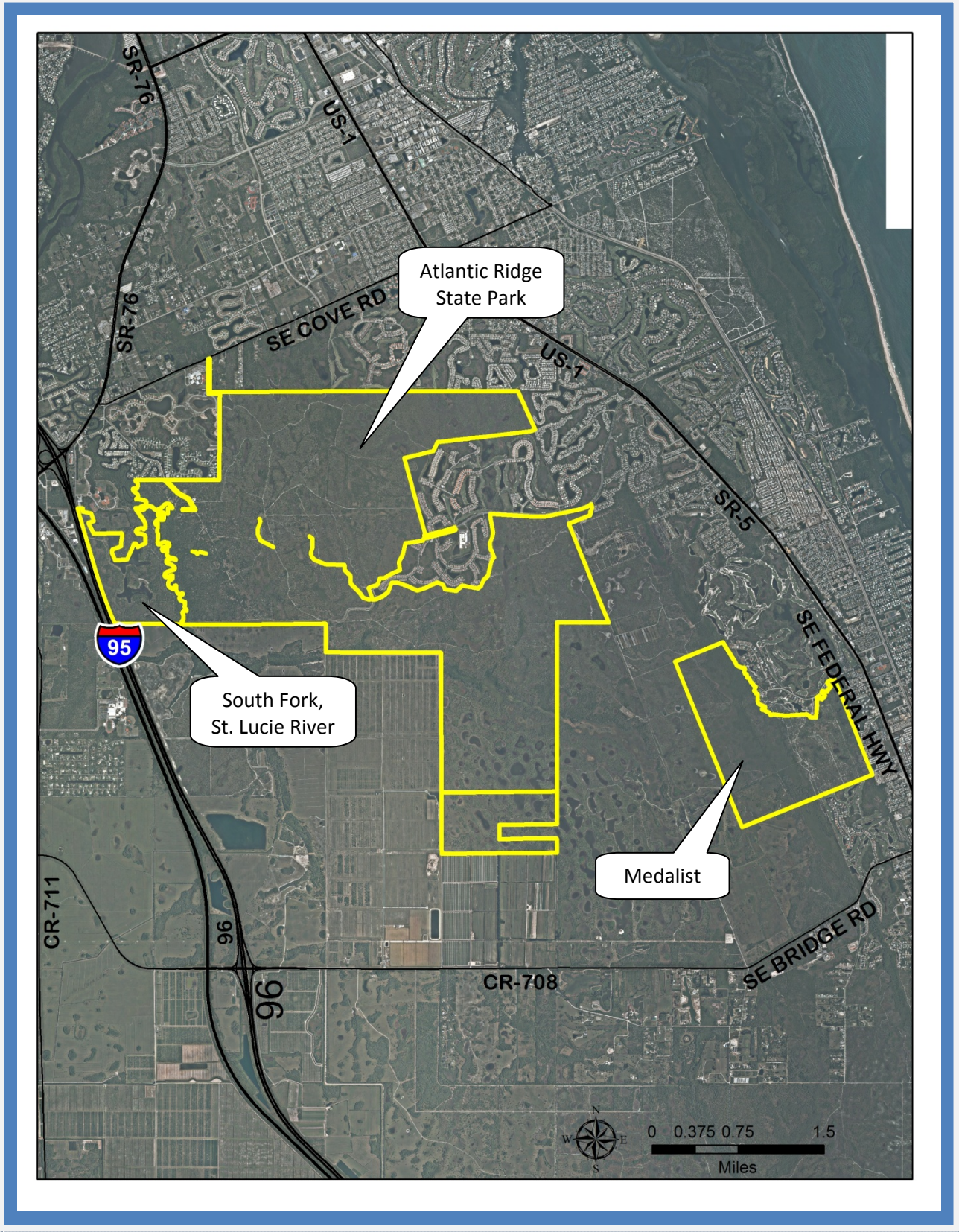


**South Fork of the St. Lucie and Atlantic Ridge
Ownership Map**



South Fork of the St. Lucie and Atlantic Ridge

Martin County

- Area within planning boundary footprint ~ 12,352 acres
- District fee-simple ownership ~ 6,077 acres
- Other public fee-simple ownership ~ 126 acres
- Area under other protective restriction (conservation easement, platted preserve area, etc.) ~ 0 acres

Site Overview

The District purchased parcels within the floodplain of the South Fork of the St. Lucie River, and between the South Fork and the Atlantic ridge, through the Save Our Rivers program. These lands were later included in a Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) restoration component. The CERP plan calls for hydrologic improvements to enhance the natural landscape.

Assessment Units

South Fork / Atlantic Ridge State Park

Core Mission Value

This area lies within and adjacent to the South Fork of the St. Lucie River. The large area of pinelands, marshes, and wet prairies that surround the river provide clean fresh water to the river. The acquisition of these lowland areas protects the unique character of the river and downstream resources in the lower river and estuaries. Hydrologic restoration of the area will enhance the protection of these resources.

Other Resource Value

This portion of the South Fork of the St. Lucie River is every bit as “wild and scenic” as the nearby Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River which carries that official designation. The South Fork of the St. Lucie is unique in south Florida. It is a blackwater river, one that receives large amounts of tannins from the surrounding lowland forests. The water is more acidic and contains chemical ions that are otherwise rare in south Florida rivers. Consequently, the river has a natural character and biological composition that is uniquely its own.

Management Issues

The area west of the river is managed by Martin County in conjunction with their popular Halpatiokee Park.

Public Use and Recreation Value

The area has hiking/jogging/bicycling trails on the western side of the river, access is through Halpatiokee Park. The eastern side of the river has been established by the Florida Park Service as the Atlantic Ridge Preserve State Park. The park is currently not open for public use daily, but hikers and equestrians may access the site by contacting Jonathan Dickinson State Park.

Medalist Tract

Core Mission Value

This area lies 1 to 1.5 miles to the east of the larger Atlantic Ridge Property. The area contains a broad area of lowlands, primarily over-drained wet prairie, on the western side, and higher scrubby pine flatwoods on the eastern side where the land elevation begins to climb, as it is situated on the landward slope of the Atlantic Ridge. Unlike the rest of the Atlantic Ridge area, water leaving this property flows south into the North Fork of the Loxahatchee River. Since the area lies along the upland/wetland transition of a sandy slope with significant urban development, the site provides substantial water quality benefits by reducing direct urban runoff into the Loxahatchee River.

Other Resource Value

Being on the landward slope of the Atlantic Ridge, the site contains scrubby flatwoods- rare in south Florida. Scrubby flatwoods contain many the same rare and endemic plants that may be found within the coastal scrub.

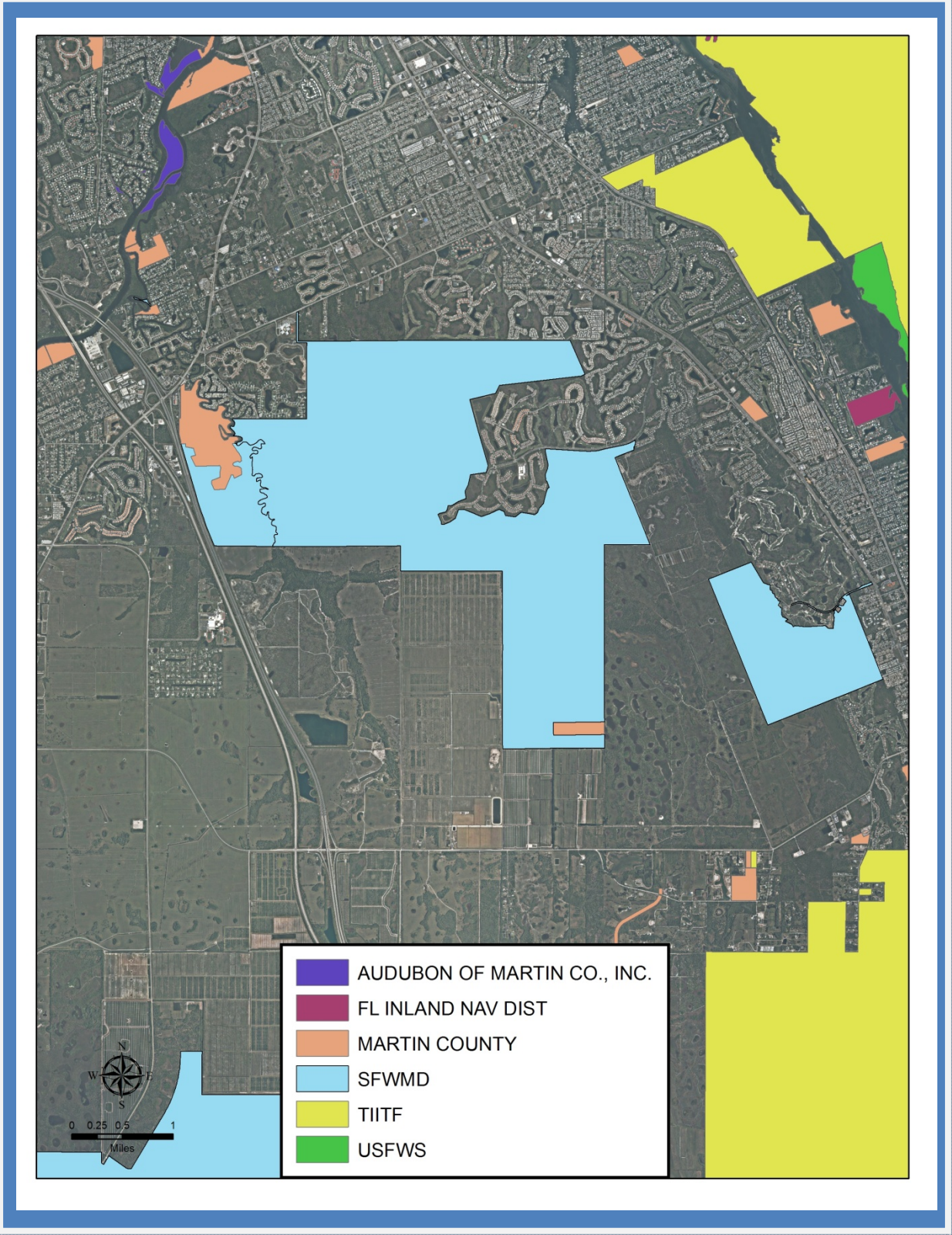
Management Issues

The area has poor practical access. Legal access, for District use only, is between two single-family home lots which are vacant now, but may soon have homes on them. The site was formerly managed by the Florida Park Service under an agreement with the District, but they returned management to the District due to the lack of public access.

Public Use and Recreation Value

The area is not open to the public because there is no public access available.

South Fork and Atlantic Ridge Area Public Land



Atlantic Ridge State Park, Photos



The depression marshes and pine flatwoods of the Atlantic Ridge State Park.

South Fork of the St. Lucie, Photos



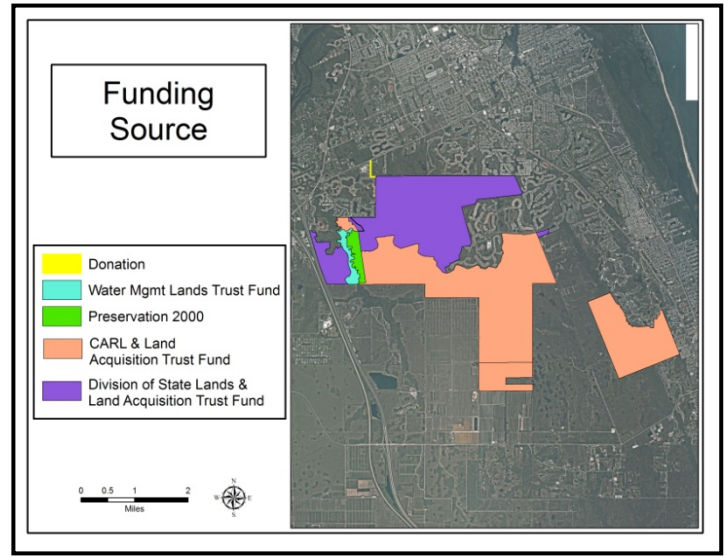
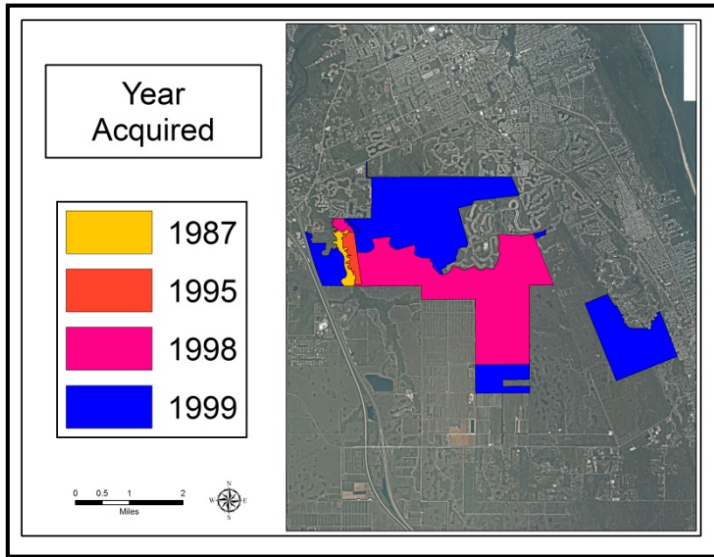
The floodplain communities of the County-managed property on the west side of the South fork of the St. Lucie River.

Medalist Tract, Photos

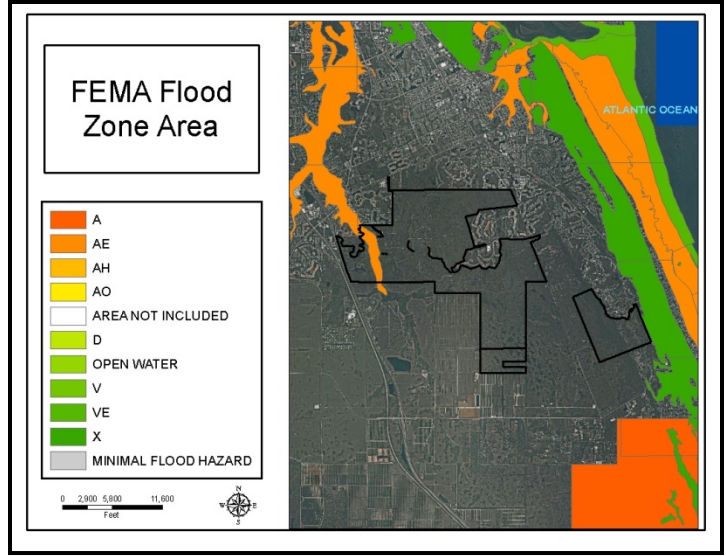
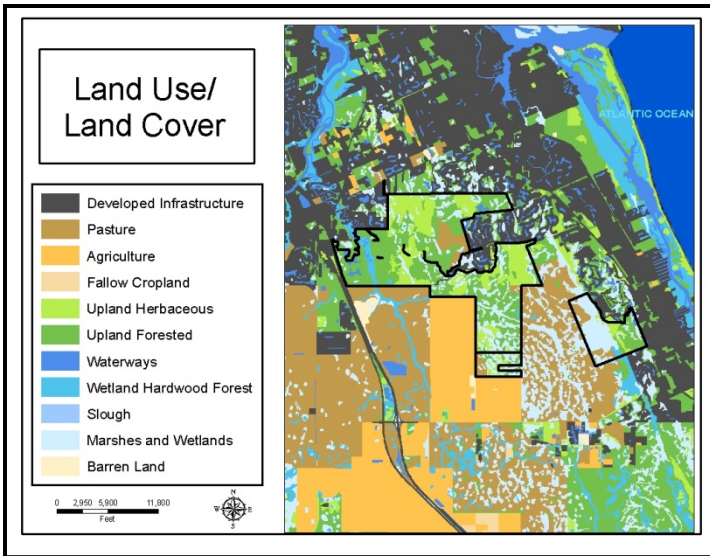


The scrubby flatwoods on the landward slope of the Atlantic Ridge within the Medalist tract.

South Fork and Atlantic Ridge: Land Acquisition



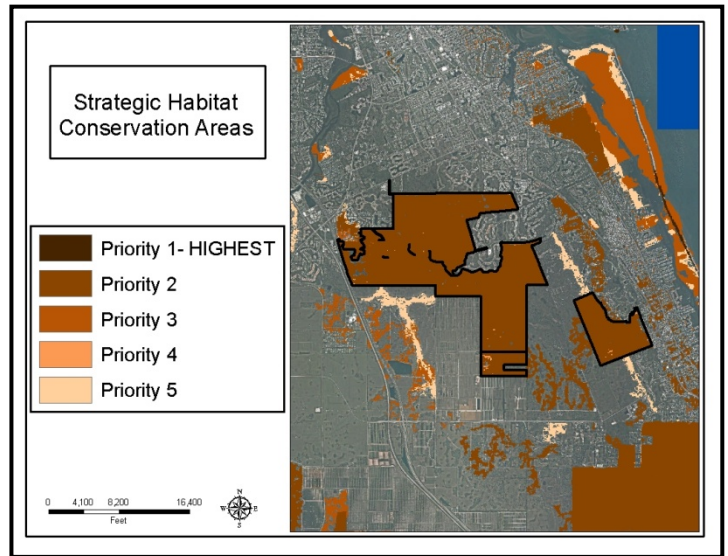
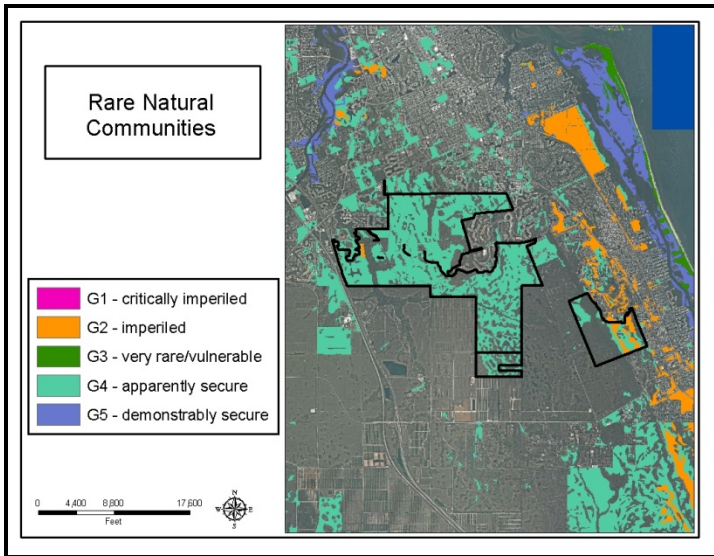
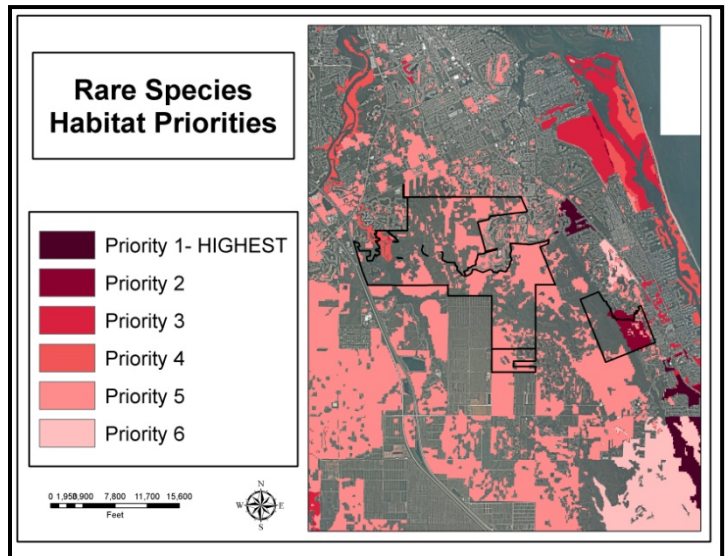
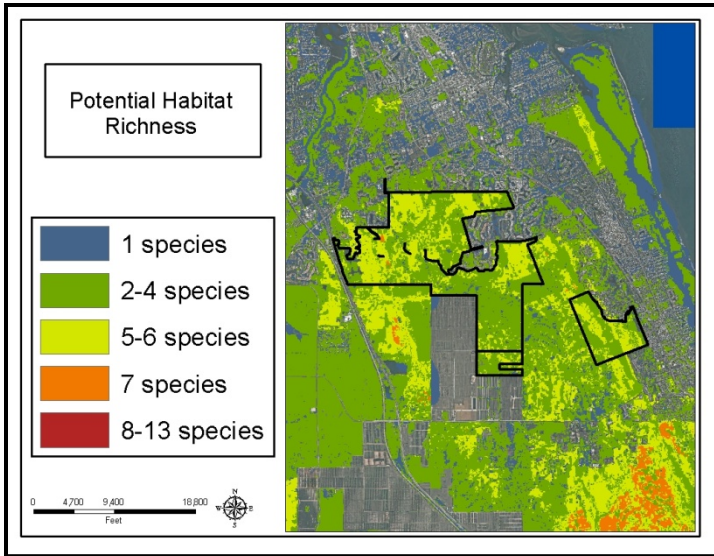
South Fork and Atlantic Ridge: Land Character



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For more information on the data layers used in the assessment, please refer to the Land Assessment Study Process and Methodology document available here: http://www.sfwmd.gov/portal/page/portal/xrepository/sfwmd_repository_pdf/land_assessment_study_process.pdf

South Fork and Atlantic Ridge: Land Character (Continued)



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