

Lake Okeechobee Watershed

Glades, Okeechobee, Martin, Palm Beach, and Hendry, Counties

Area within planning boundary footprint	35,681 acres
District fee-simple ownership	35,681 acres

Acquired by the District in the 1950s and 1960s after the completion of the Herbert Hoover dike and the Central and South Florida Project for flood control and protection. The land was necessary to obtain the rights necessary to maintain the water within the lake in accordance with the approved regulation schedule.

Site Overview

Passed in 2000, the Lake Okeechobee Protection Act (Section 373.4595, Florida Statutes) established a restoration and protection program for the lake. This program addresses the reduction of phosphorus loading to the lake from both internal and external sources. The strategy has involved regulatory controls, voluntary public-private partnerships, and the construction of large stormwater treatment areas on district-owned land.

Assessment Units

North of Lake

This is a large area northwest of Lake Okeechobee that was acquired with a large storage and treatment facility in mind. It is currently undeveloped improved pasture leased for cattle grazing.

Lemkin Creek

This area consists of a Hybrid Wetland Treatment Technology project that uses a combination of physical, chemical, and wetland treatment to remove excess nutrients from water flowing into the Lake. An additional stormwater treatment cell is planned for the site as well.

Grassy Island / Taylor Creek STA

This 4,000 acre property includes an operational pilot stormwater treatment area on 193 acres, and pasture lands under a cattle grazing lease. The area also contains significant native plant communities.

Nubbin Slough

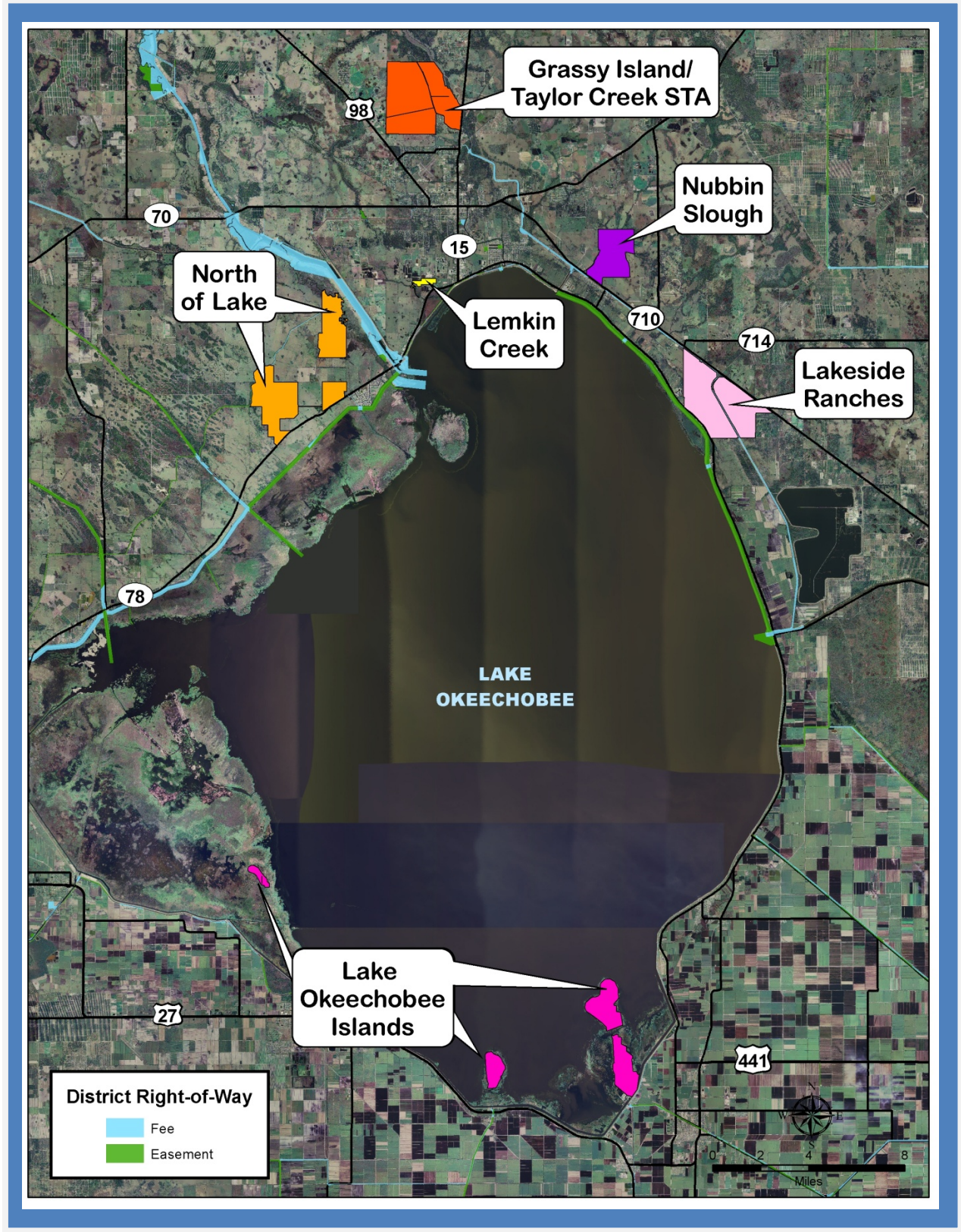
A large stormwater treatment cell has been constructed on this property, but the site contains substantial acreage that lies outside of the project footprint.

Lakeside Ranches

The first stormwater treatment cell has been constructed. There are small areas of forested land on site. The southeastern portion of the area is under a lease for cattle grazing.

Lake Okeechobee Islands

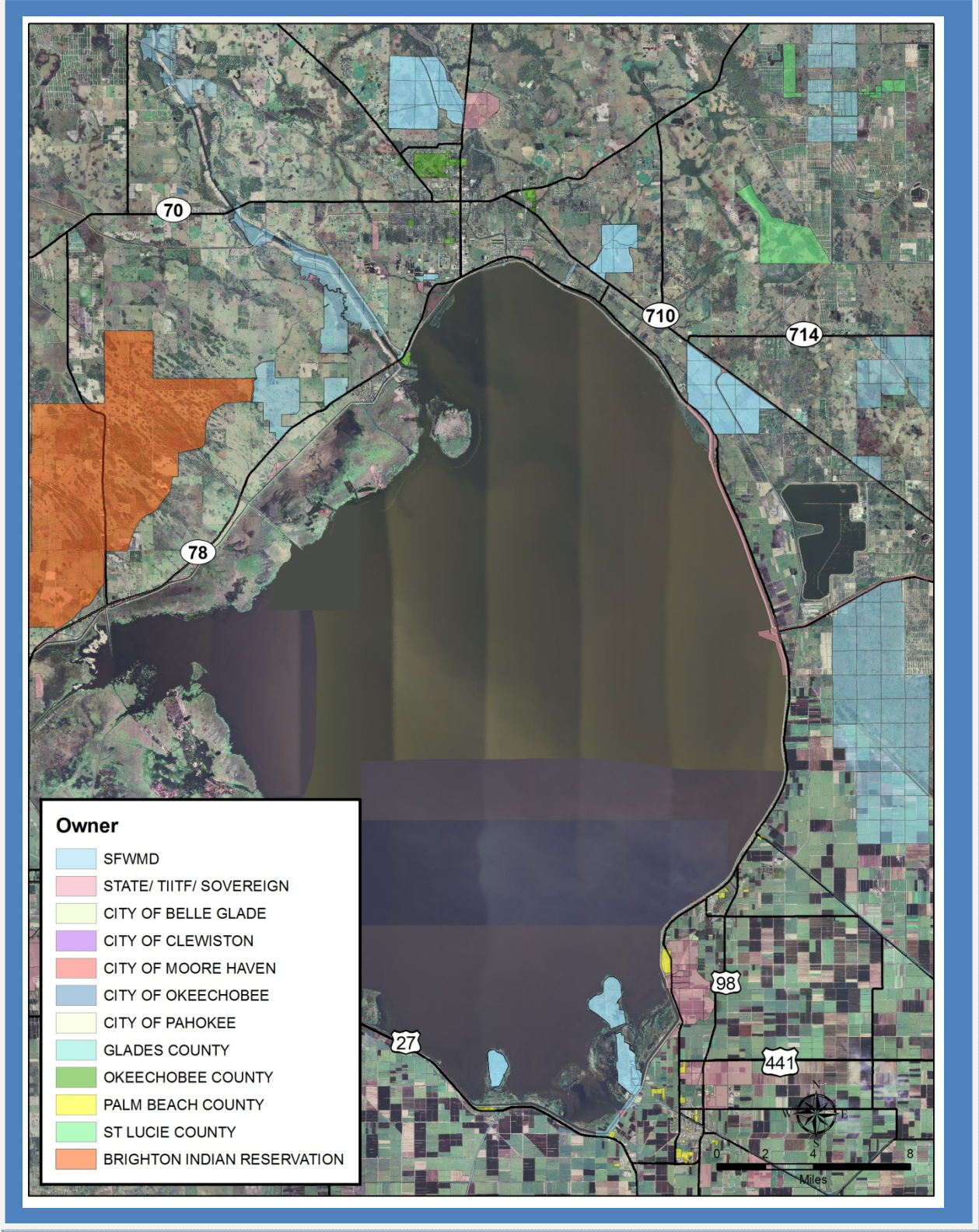
Lake Okeechobee Watershed Map



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Lake Okeechobee Watershed - Public Lands

(based on county ownership records)



Lake Okeechobee, Assessment Unit: North of Lake

Core Mission Value

These tracts lie northwest of Lake Okeechobee. They were acquired to provide storage and treatment for water coming off of the nearby agricultural lands to reduce the amount of excess nutrients entering the lake. Project plans have not been finalized for this property.

Other Resource Value

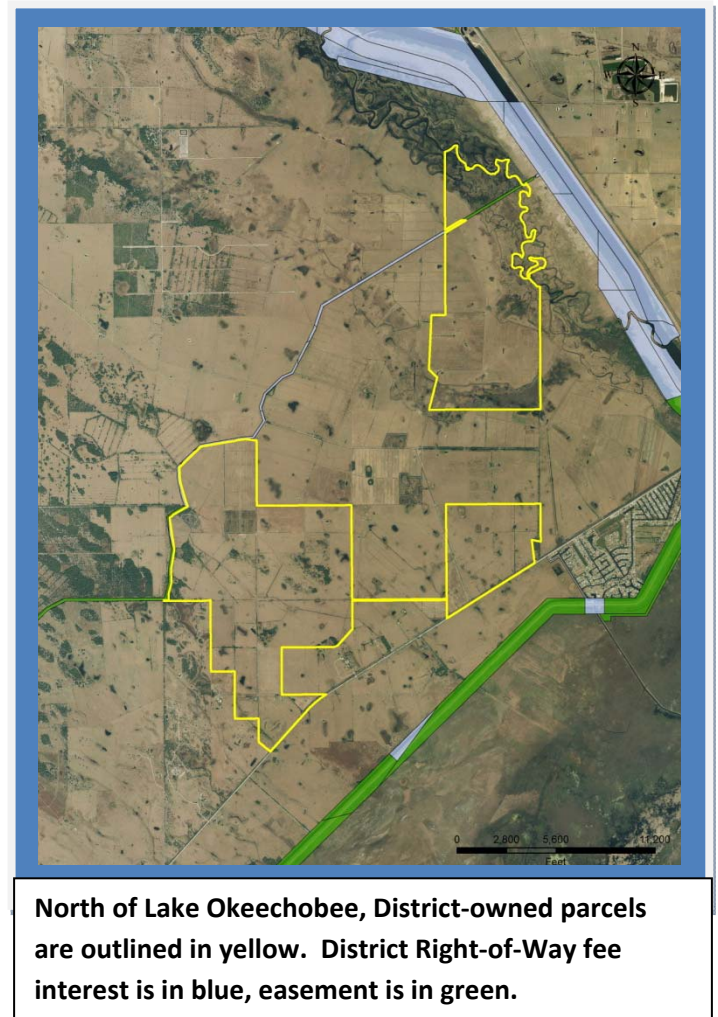
This area was historically part of a large wet prairie system, approximately 20 miles wide, that occupied much of the space between Lake Okeechobee and the Lake Wales Ridge to the northwest. Many years ago, the area was converted to improved cattle pasture, and remains as such today. There are few trees on these sites, except for the occasional oak tree or cabbage palm. The area consists of three large parcels. The northeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of the northeastern most parcel falls within the historic river floodplain of the Kissimmee River

Current Use, Management Issues

The site is being managed through grazing leases until such time as the property is needed for the development of a water storage or treatment project.

Public Use and Recreation Value

There are no developed public use facilities on these properties.



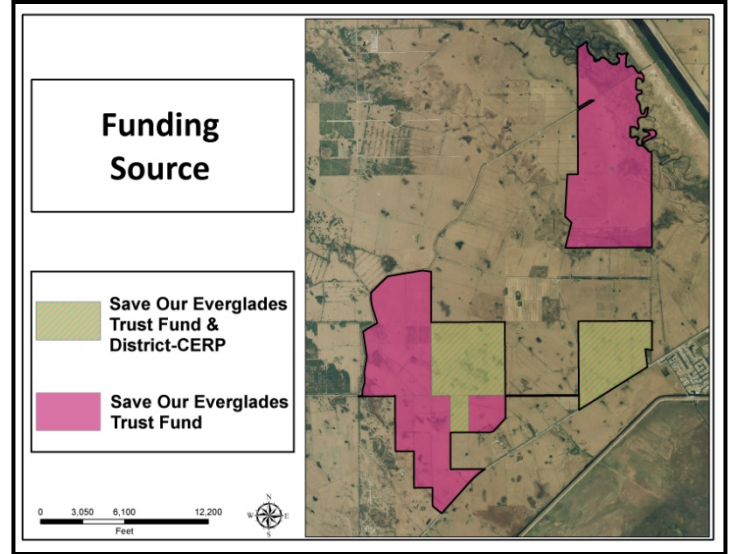
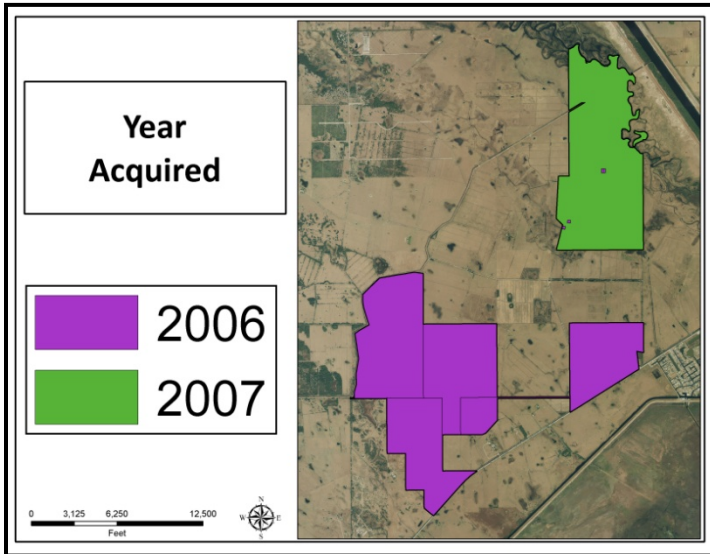
Lake Okeechobee, North of Lake, Photos



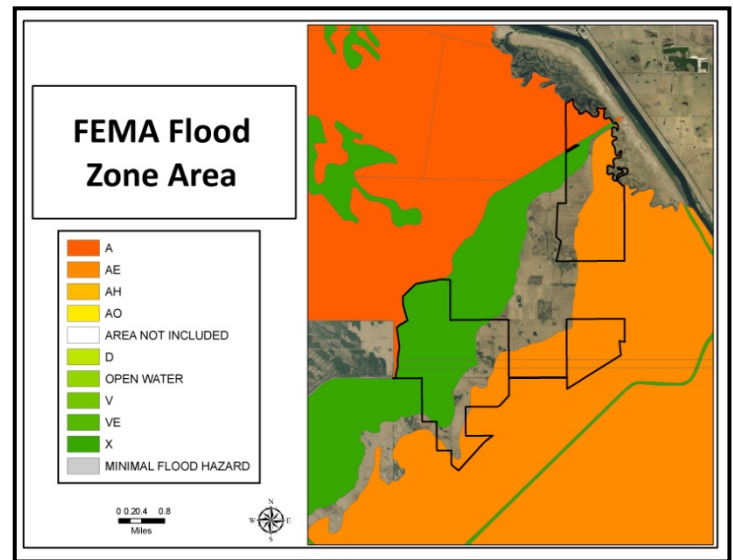
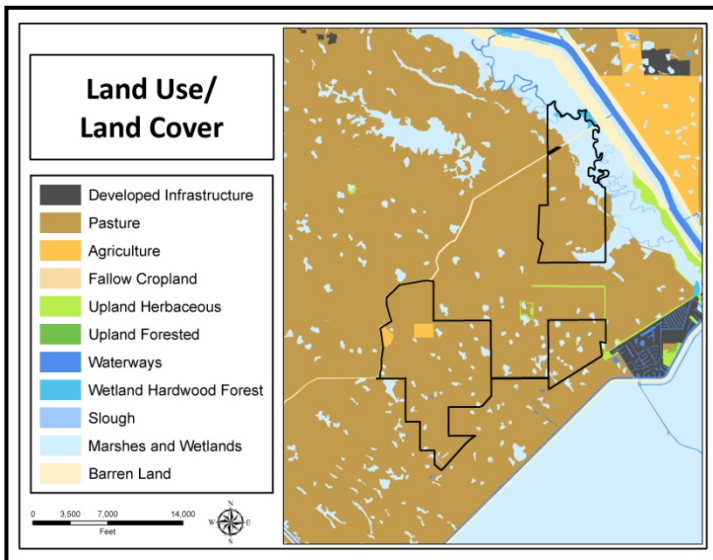
These tracts consist of open improved pasture



North of Lake: Land Acquisition



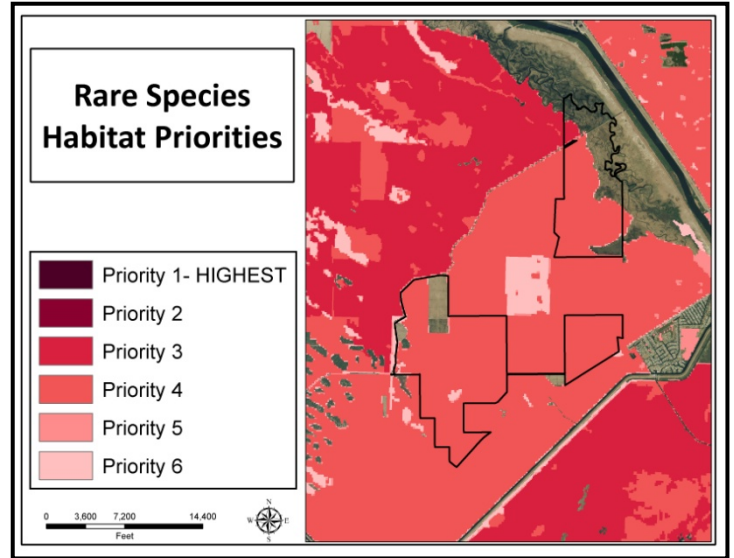
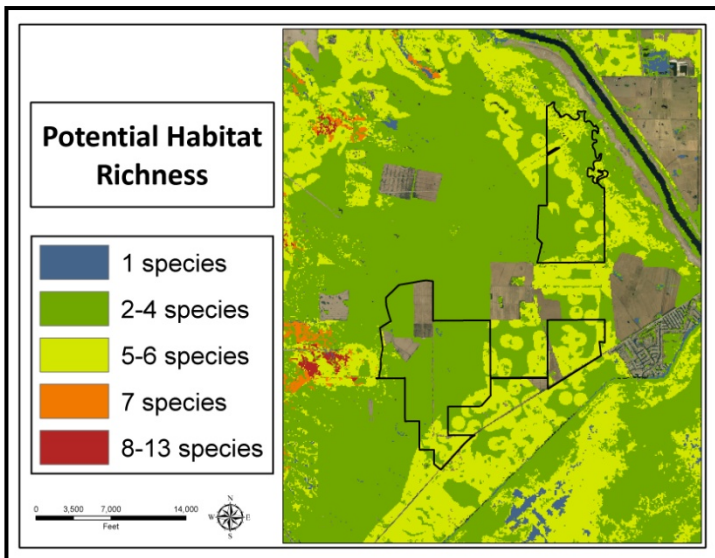
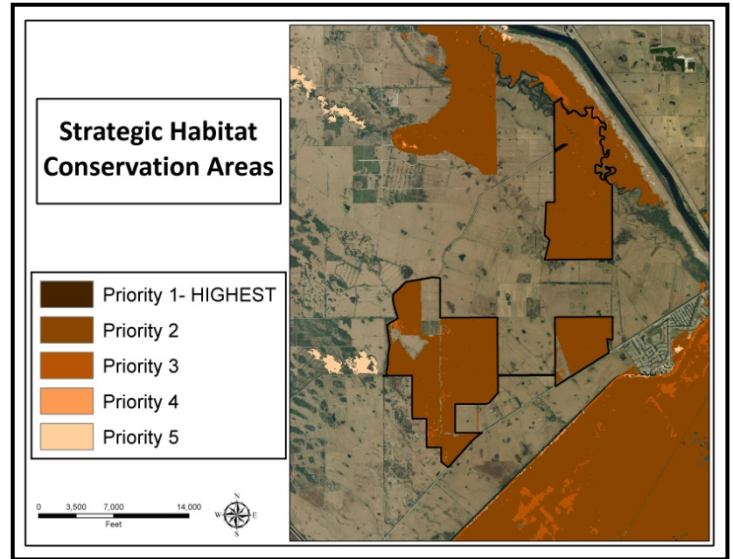
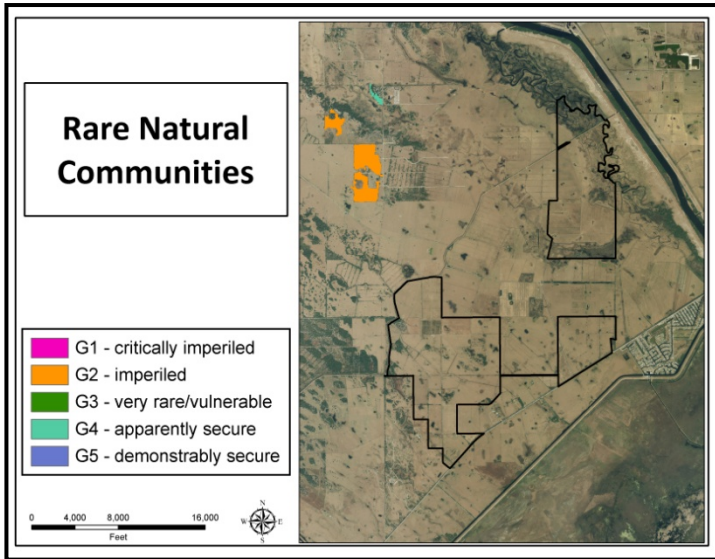
North of Lake: Land Character



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North of Lake: Land Character (Continued)



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**Lake Okeechobee,
Assessment Unit: Lemkin Creek**

Core Mission Value

This area consists of an operational Hybrid Wetland Treatment Technology project that uses a combination of physical, chemical, and wetland treatment to remove excess nutrients from water flowing into the Lake. A stormwater treatment cell using wetland plants will provide a second phase of treatment, once constructed.

Other Resource Value

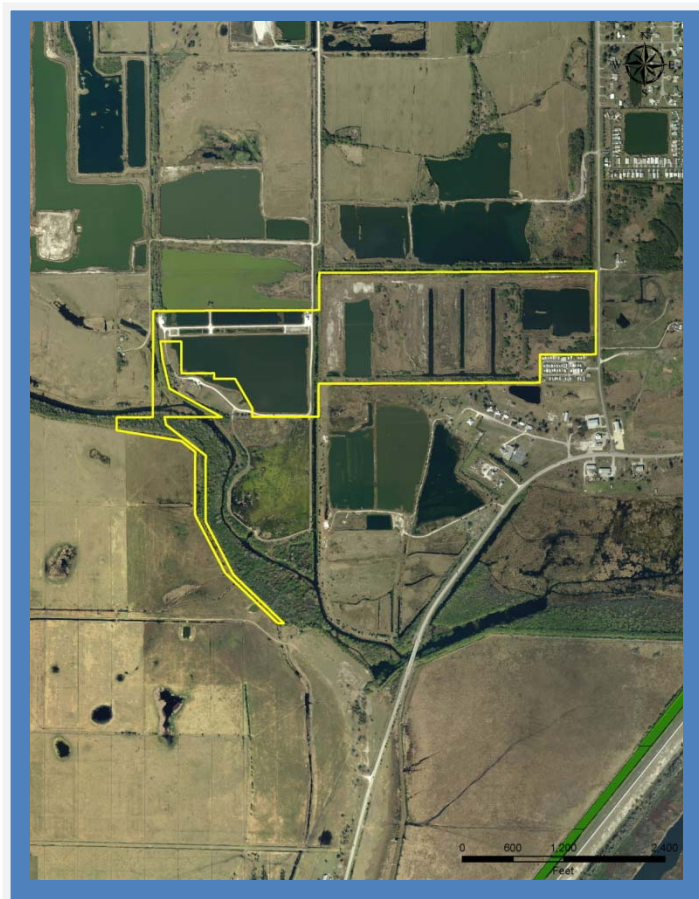
This area is adjacent to a small area of state-owned floodplain marshes.

Current Use, Management Issues

The area is being managed as an urban stormwater treatment facility.

Public Use and Recreation Value

The area is not open for public use.



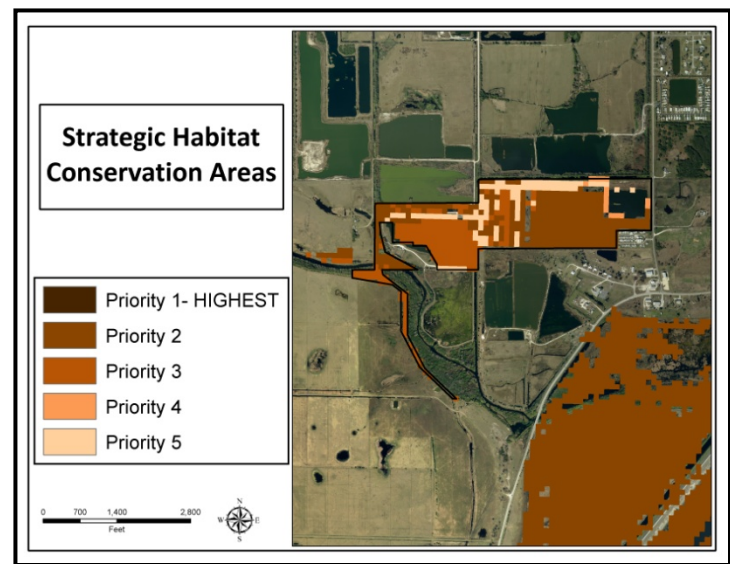
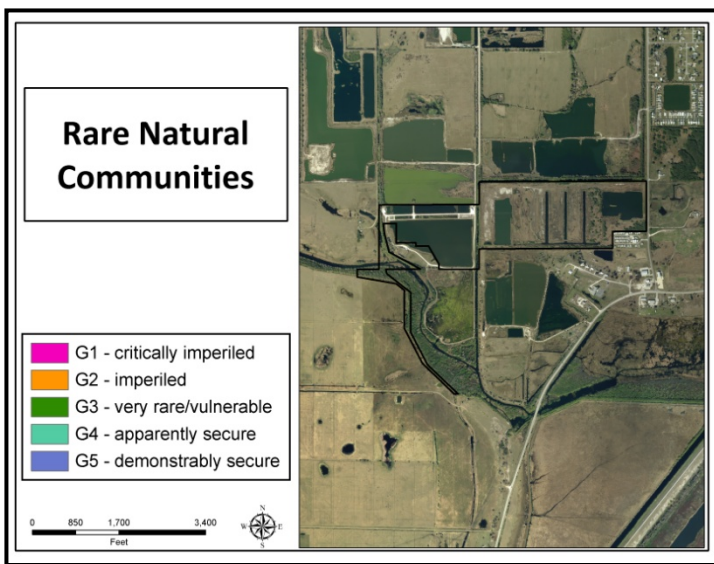
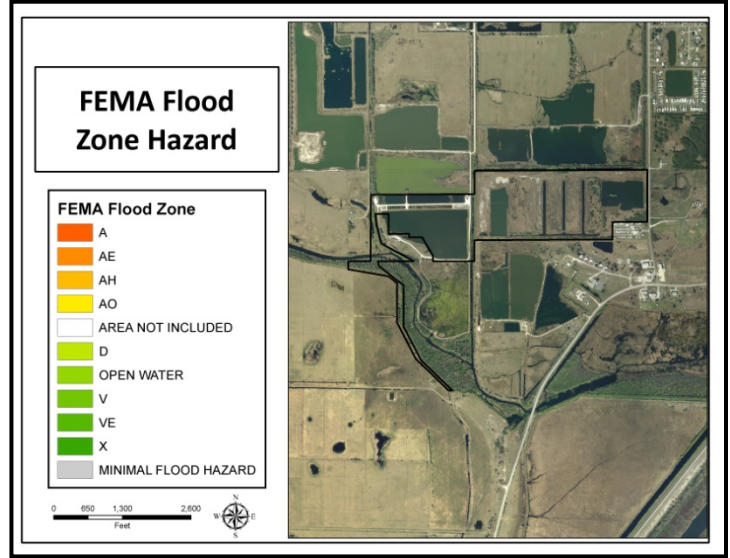
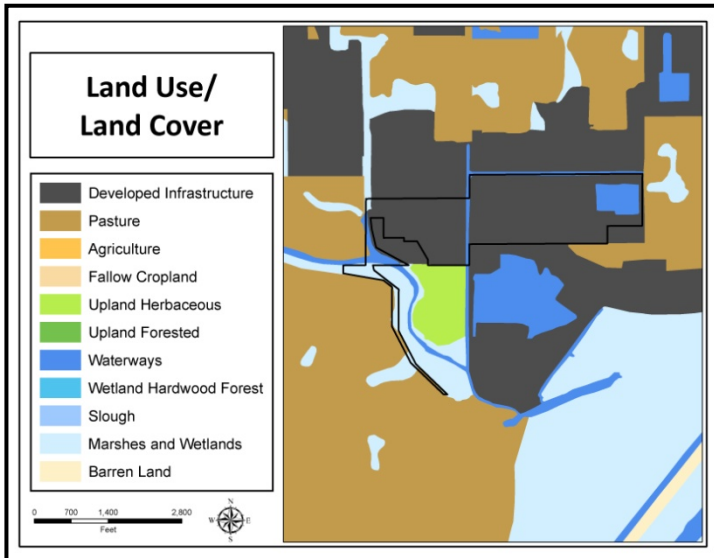
Lemkin Creek, District-owned parcels are outlined in yellow. Properties were purchased in 2006 with funds from Save Our Everglades Trust Fund and Preservation 2000. District Right-of-Way easement is in green.

Lake Okeechobee, Lemkin Creek, Photos



An oblique Aerial showing the Lemkin Creek water treatment facility, and its components

Lemkin Creek: Land Character

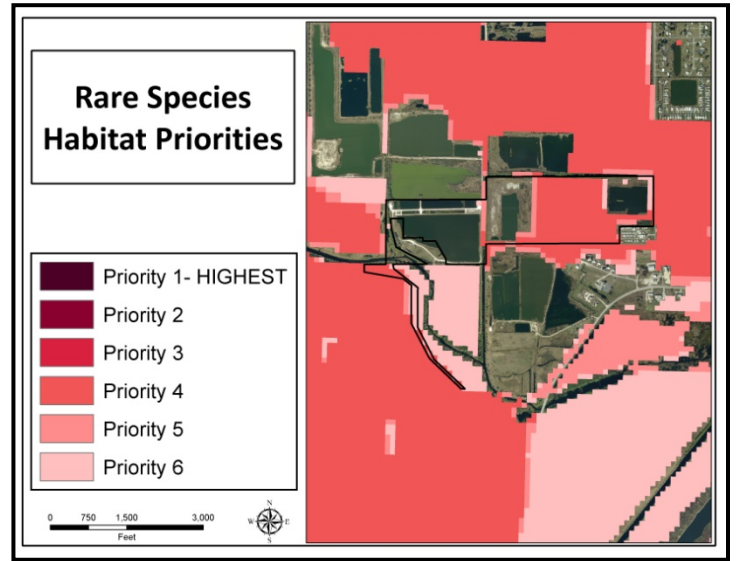
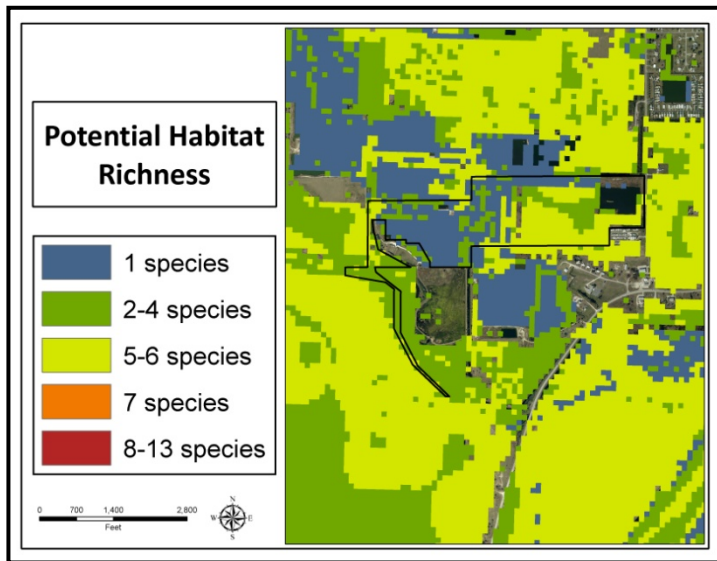


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Lemkin Creek: Land Character (continued)



Lake Okeechobee, Assessment Unit: Grassy Island / Taylor Creek STA

Core Mission Value

This tract lies north of Lake Okeechobee. It was acquired to provide storage and treatment for water coming off of the nearby agricultural lands to reduce the amount of excess nutrients entering the lake. A 193 acre stormwater treatment area was completed on the portion of the site lying east of Taylor Creek. There is also a 30 Cubic Foot per Second Hybrid Wetland Treatment Technology project in the northeastern corner, and a dispersed water storage project planned for the western area to rehydrate the depression marshes.

Other Resource Value

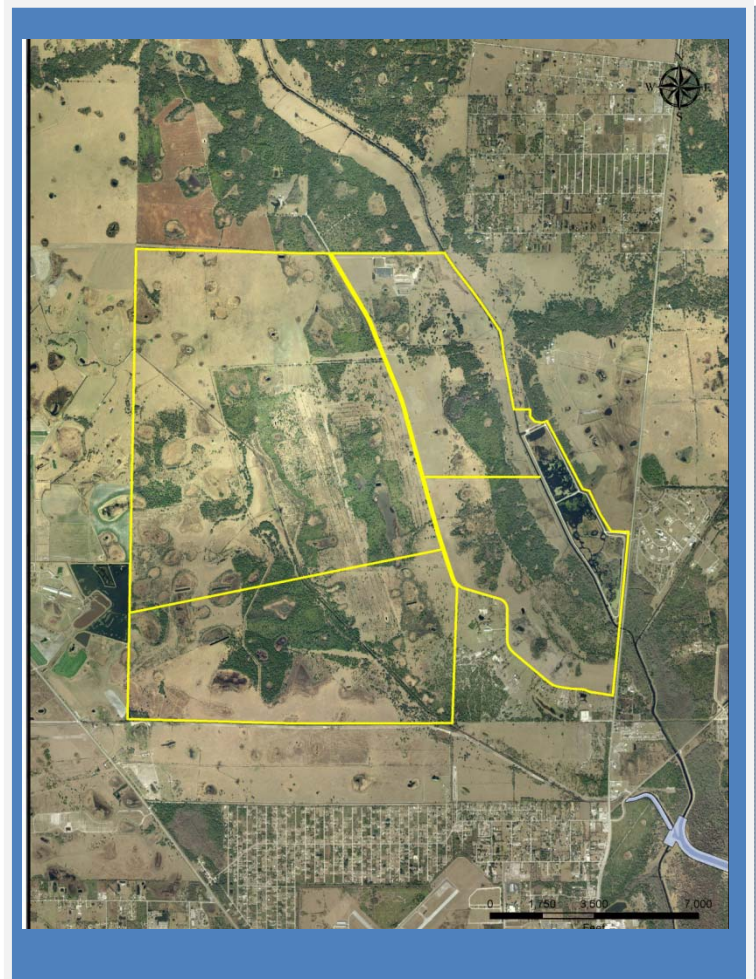
The land to the west of the creek is approximately 2/3 improved pasture. The remainder of the site consists of overly drained floodplain marshes and depression marshes, large oak hammocks, and pine flatwoods. The site adjoins approximately 1,000 acres of land to the east that is owned by the State and contains a Division of Forestry field office and a youth center. About ½ of the state property is heavily forested with pinelands and floodplain cypress.

Current Use, Management Issues

The southeastern portion of the site is being managed as a water quality treatment cell. The remainder is being managed through grazing leases until such time as the property is needed for the development of a water storage or treatment project. One of the leases (200 acres) is operated by the Okeechobee School Board as part of their Agricultural Sciences program.

Public Use and Recreation Value

This site has been opened to public use. The westernmost portion has been established as a youth hunting area. The large hammock area between the creek and NW 50th drive is becoming a popular equestrian and bicycling destination. The 193 acre treatment area, on the east side of the creek, lies along U.S. Hwy 441 and is a very popular public use site. The recreational uses are managed cooperatively with Okeechobee County. The site contains lush marsh vegetation and cypress stands, abundant wildlife, and a high quality 3-mile shellrock levee top that makes the site ideal for the nearby residents of the City of Okeechobee to take casual walks or bicycle rides.



Grassy Island/ Taylor Creek STA, District-owned parcels are outlined in yellow. District Right-of-Way fee interest is in blue.

Lake Okeechobee, Grassy Island / Taylor Creek STA, Photos (west of the creek)



Photos depicting the ranch portion of the property that lies west of Taylor Creek. The area contains some pockets of natural vegetation cover, but is mostly improved pasture.

Lake Okeechobee, Grassy Island / Taylor
Creek STA, Photos (hammock area west of
the creek)

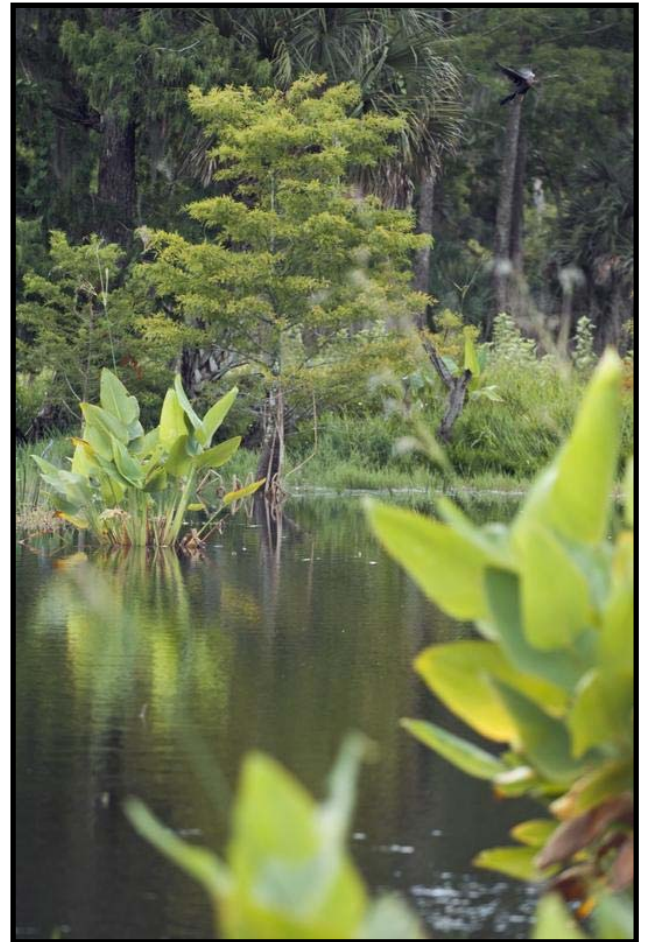


Lake Okeechobee, Grassy Island / Taylor
Creek STA, Photos



An oblique aerial photo of the Taylor Creek STA (top), and vegetation within the stormwater treatment cells (bottom)

Lake Okeechobee, Grassy Island / Taylor Creek STA, Photos



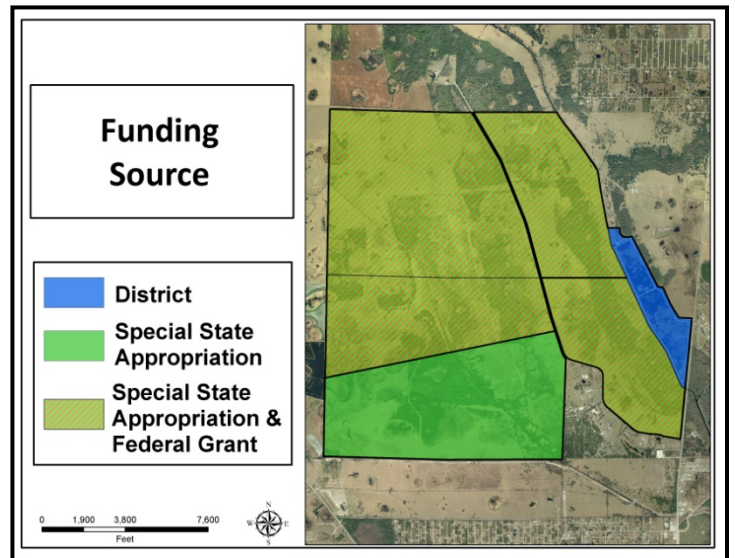
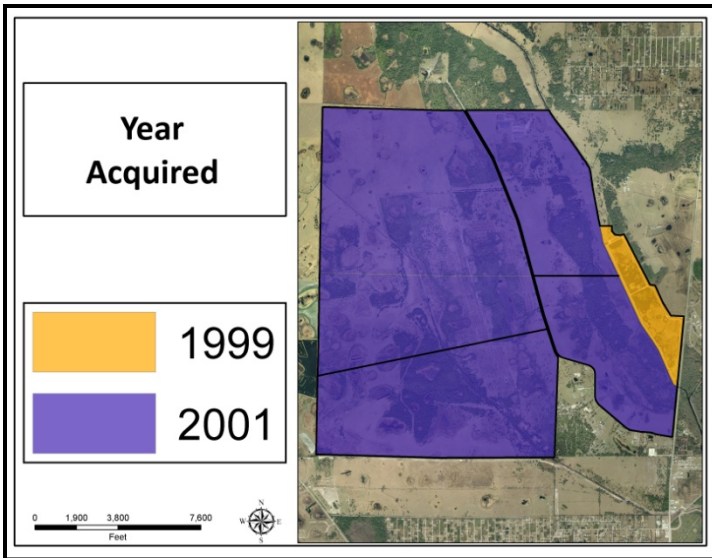
Roseate Spoonbills in the Taylor Creek STA, (upper left), four otters in the cypress (on top of the log) (upper right), some of the vegetation within the stormwater treatment cells – hard at work taking excess nutrients out of the water (bottom two photos)

Lake Okeechobee, Grassy Island / Taylor Creek STA, Photos (Public Use)

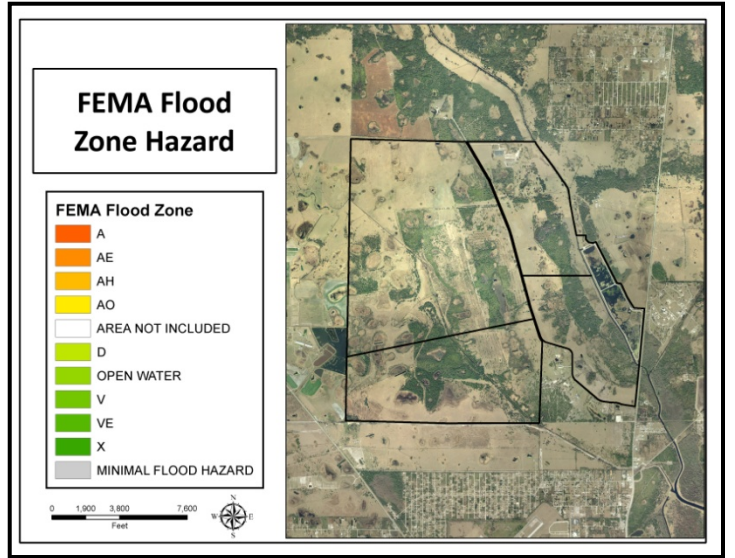
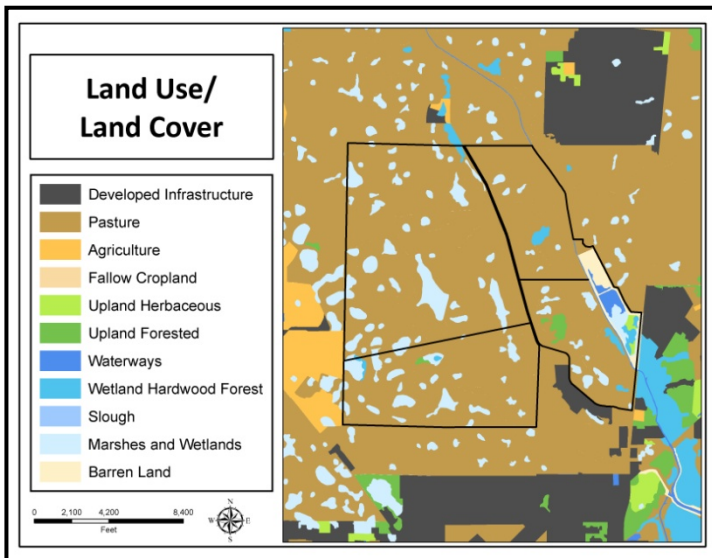


Public Use facilities: chiki picnic shelters, the 3-mile shellrock trail (above left and left), restroom and informational kiosk (top, right), and the trailhead parking area (above)

Grassy Island / Taylor Creek STA: Land Acquisition



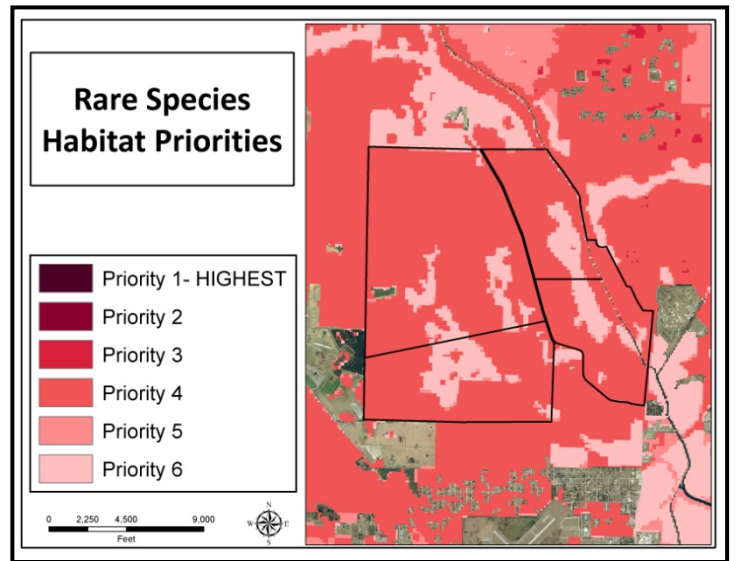
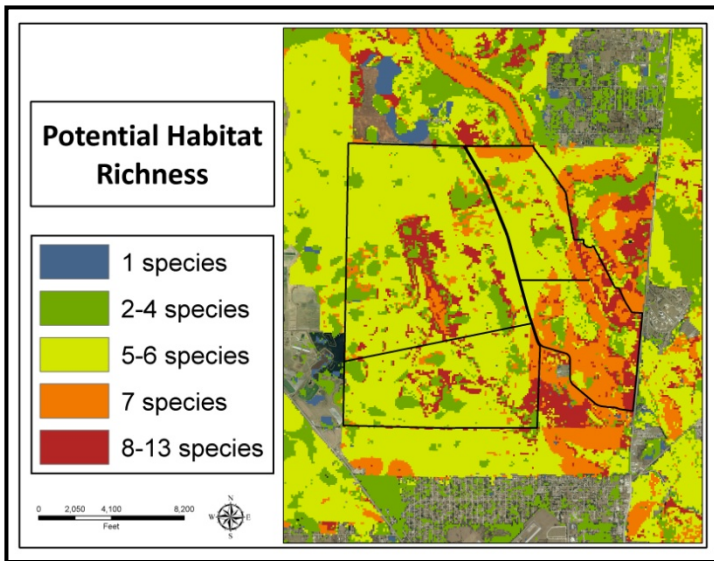
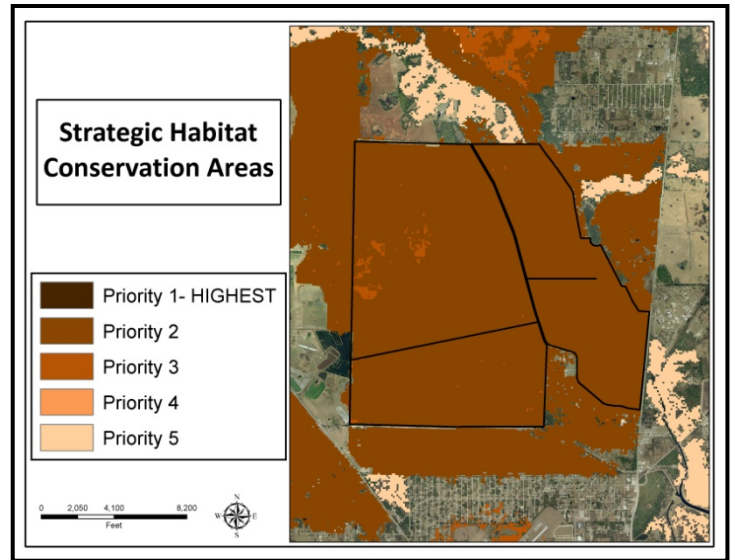
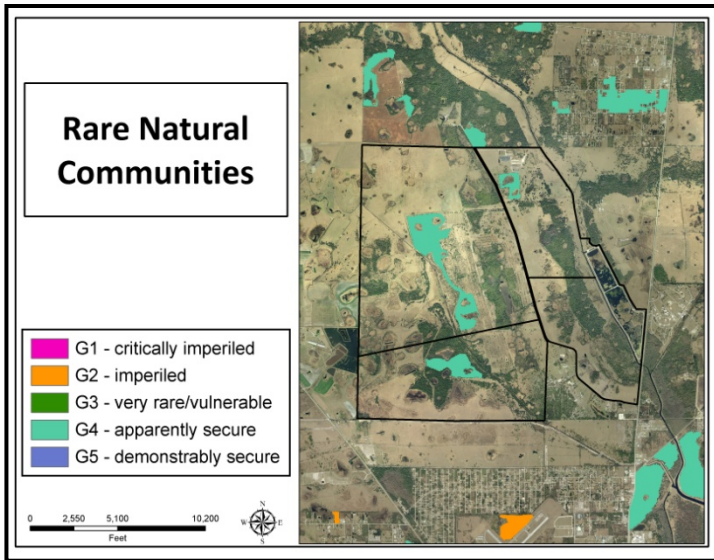
Grassy Island / Taylor Creek STA: Land Character



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Grassy Island / Taylor Creek STA: Land Character (Continued)



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**Lake Okeechobee,
Assessment Unit: Nubbin Slough**

Core Mission Value

This tract lies northeast of Lake Okeechobee. It was acquired to provide treatment for water coming off of the nearby agricultural lands to reduce the amount of excess nutrients entering the lake. The stormwater treatment cell is in the final stages of construction.

Other Resource Value

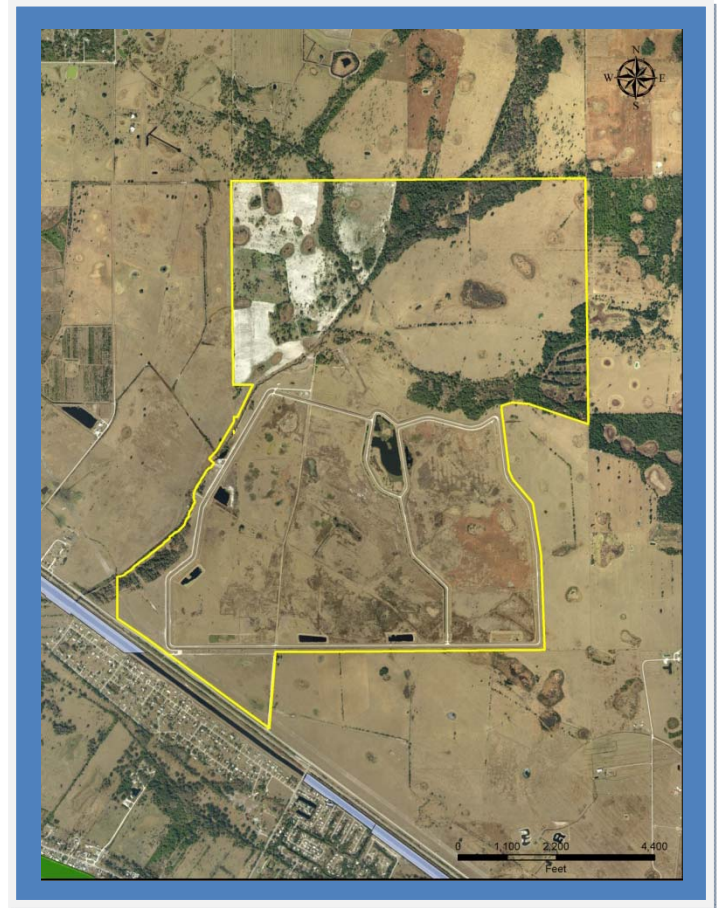
Wetland treatment cells often attract a wide variety of wildlife. The site is oriented along a cypress-lined flow way. There is also a cabbage palm hammock near the center of the western side of the property. There are no other public lands in the immediate vicinity.

Current Use, Management Issues

The southeastern portion of the site is being managed as a water quality treatment cell under construction. There is an area of improved pasture north of the treatment cell that is currently under a cattle lease. A wetland and dairy remediation project has been completed northeast of the stormwater treatment cell.

Public Use and Recreation Value

There has been no public use on the site due to the construction of the treatment cell and associated water control structures. Planning for facilitating public use within this area is underway. The site could potentially support the same kind of popular recreational uses as the Taylor Creek stormwater treatment area.



Nubbin slough, District-owned parcels are outlined in yellow. District Right-of-Way fee interest is in blue.

Nubbin Slough Individual Parcel Assessment

Triangle Parcel

There is a triangular outparcel of land bounded by SR710, SE 58th St., and SE 48th St. This outparcel is vacant and degraded improved pasture that fell outside of the designed footprint of the treatment cell.



Lake Okeechobee, Nubbin Slough, Photos



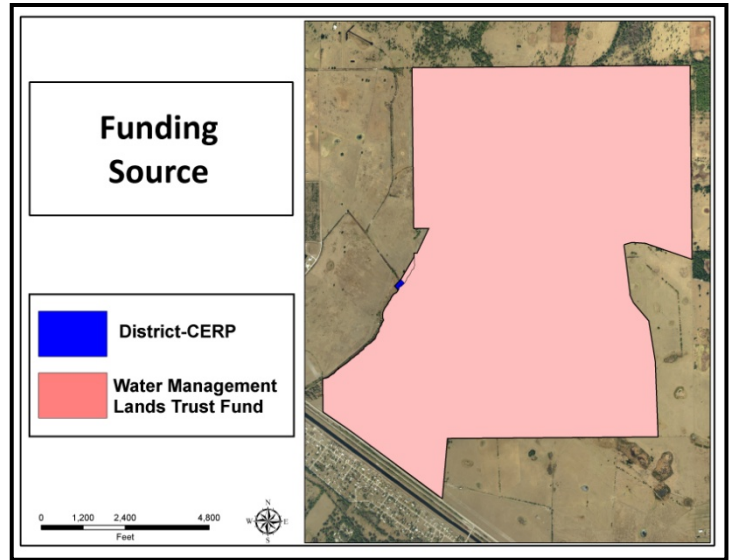
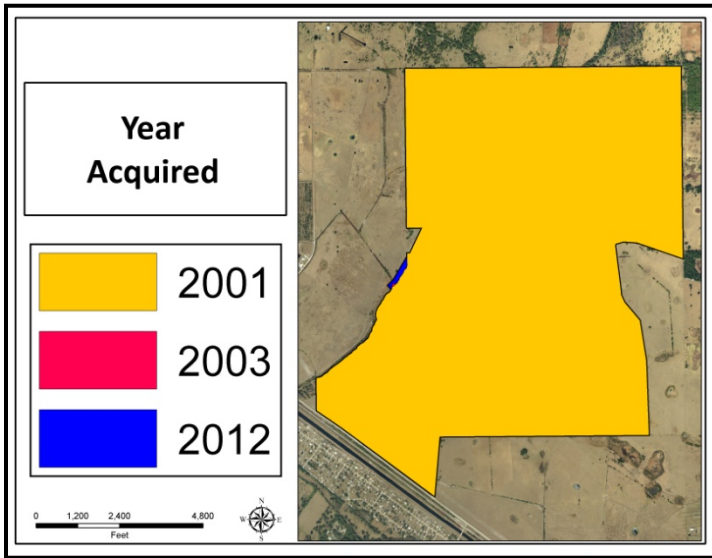
Oblique photo showing the stormwater treatment cell (east side, top; west side, bottom)

Lake Okeechobee, Nubbin Slough, Photos

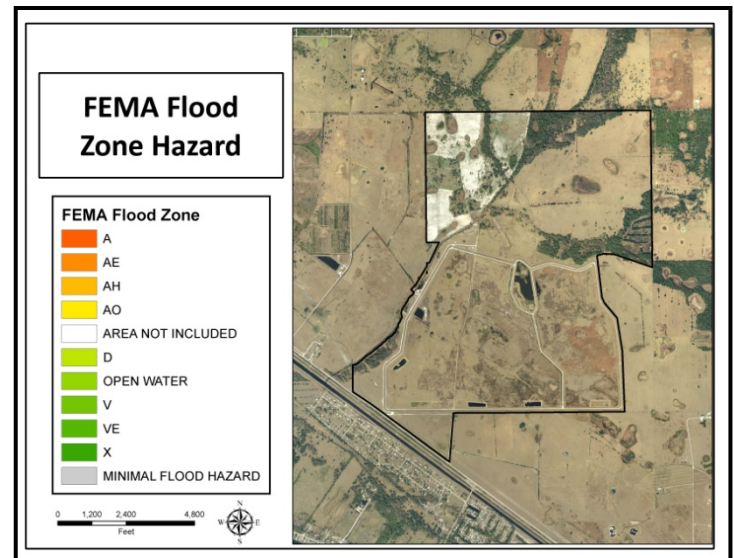
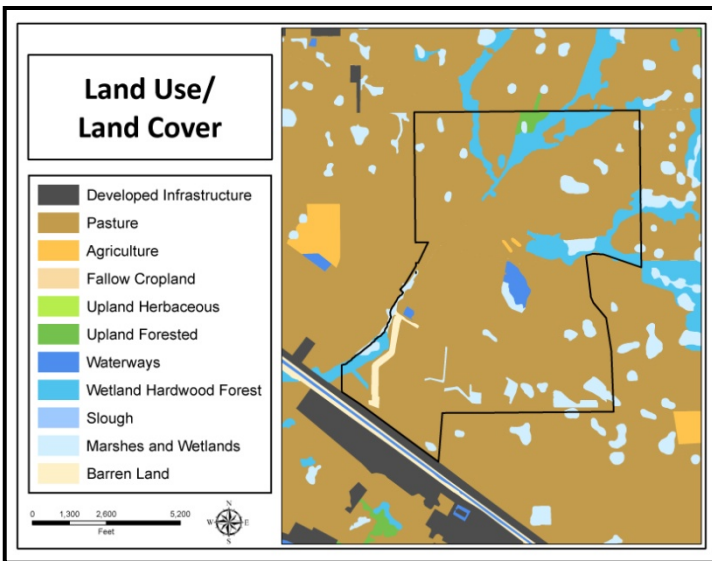


The cattle pasture and cabbage palm hammock within the northeastern portion of the property (top left), mechanical vegetation management to remove Brazilian pepper (top right), the primary drainage ditch running through the historic cypress slough (middle), and a prescribed fire at nubbin slough (bottom left).

Nubbin Slough: Land Acquisition



Nubbin Slough: Land Character

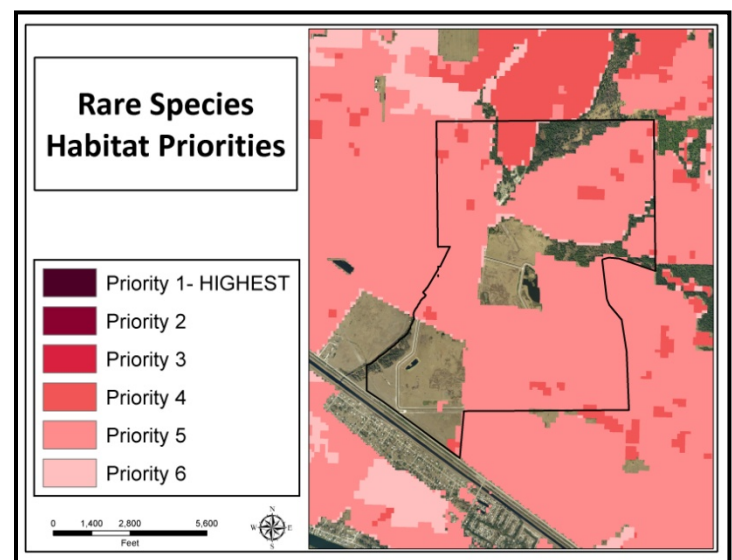
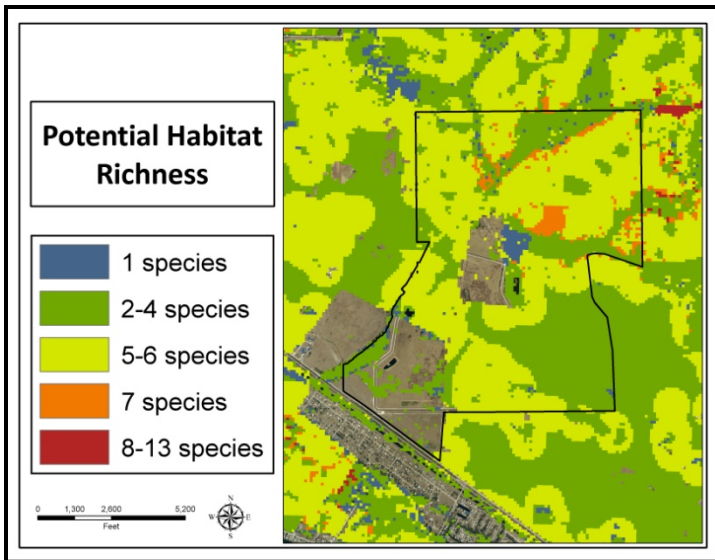
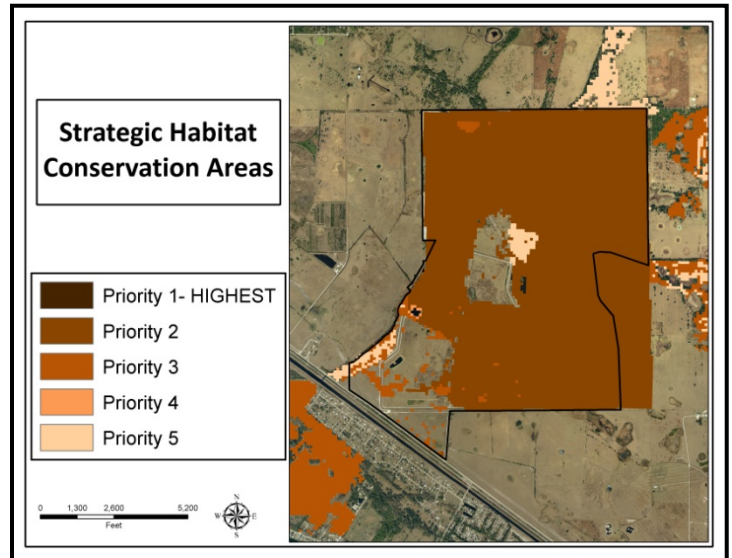
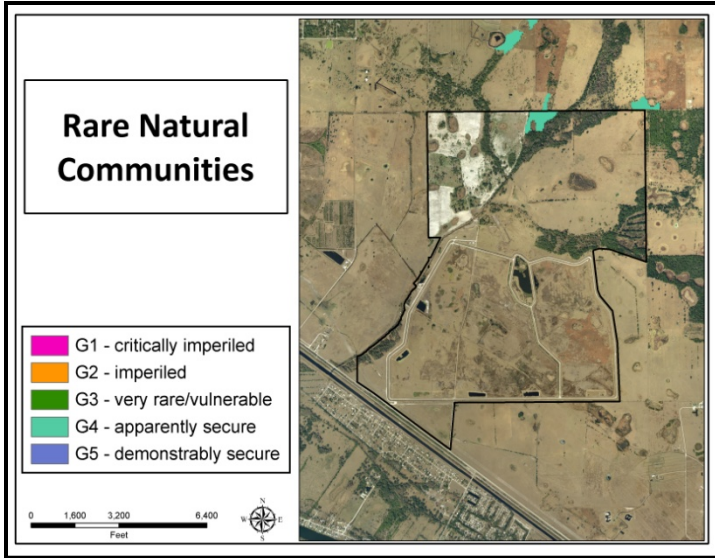


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Nubbin Slough: Land Character (Continued)



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Lake Okeechobee,

Assessment Unit: Lakeside Ranches

Core Mission Value

These tracts lie along the east side of Lake Okeechobee. They were acquired to provide treatment for water coming off of the nearby agricultural lands to reduce the amount of excess nutrients entering the lake. The first stormwater treatment Cell has been completed.

Other Resource Value

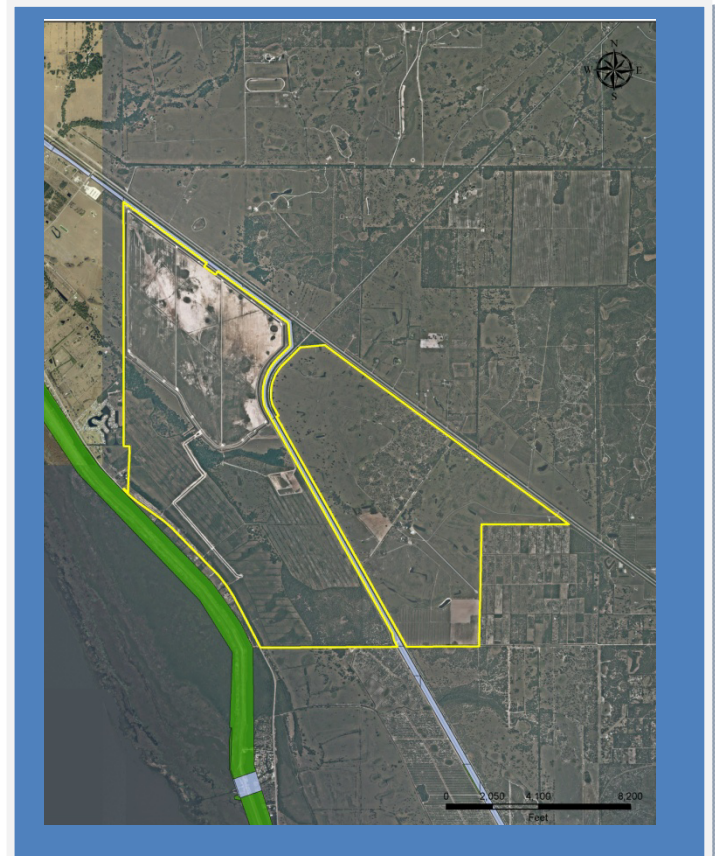
Wetland treatment cells often attract a wide variety of wildlife. Additionally, there are portions of the site that are forested and will be left outside of the footprint of the treatment cells. These include small stands of cypress, oak hammock, and pine flatwoods. These will be important roosting and nesting areas for wildlife utilizing the treatment cells. The forested wetlands are being restored as mitigation for wetland impacts associated with the construction of the stormwater treatment project.

Current Use, Management Issues

The southeastern portion of the site is being managed, on an interim basis, as a cattle ranch through a grazing lease. The northwestern portion of the site contains the completed water quality treatment cells, and the area in the middle is largely vacant agricultural land.

Public Use and Recreation Value

There has been no public use on the site due to the construction of the treatment cells and associated water control structures. The District is in the planning process for facilitating public use within this area.



Lakeside Ranches, District-owned parcels are outlined in yellow. District Right-of-Way fee interest is in blue, easement is in green.

Lake Okeechobee, Lakeside Ranches, Photos



An oblique aerial showing a forested area (top left), the constructed stormwater treatment cell at the northern end of the property (right, top and bottom), the newly constructed pump station controlling water levels within the treatment cells (bottom left)



Lake Okeechobee, Lakeside Ranches,

Photos



Pine flatwoods after a fire, near the center of the site



A former home site, with live oak trees



A large metal building and horse stables on the portion of the property leased for cattle grazing.



Lake Okeechobee, Lakeside Ranches,

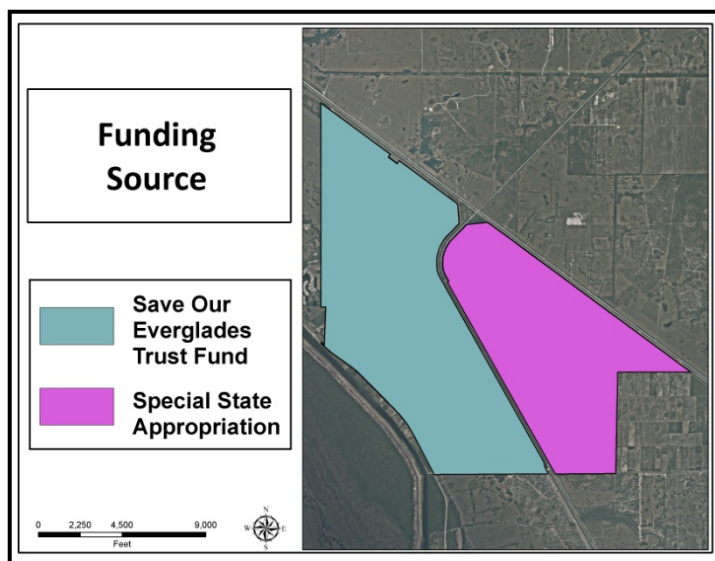
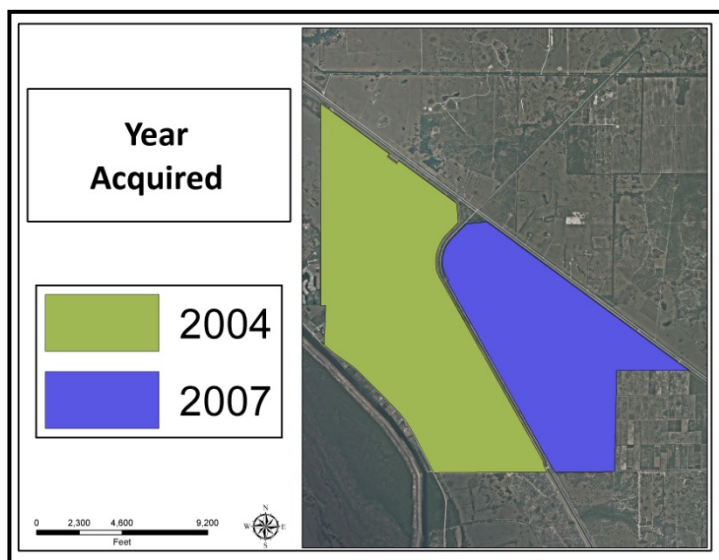
Photos



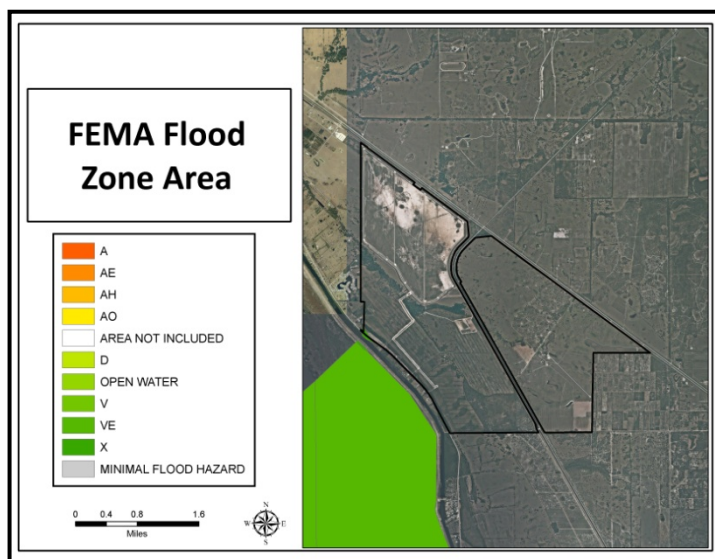
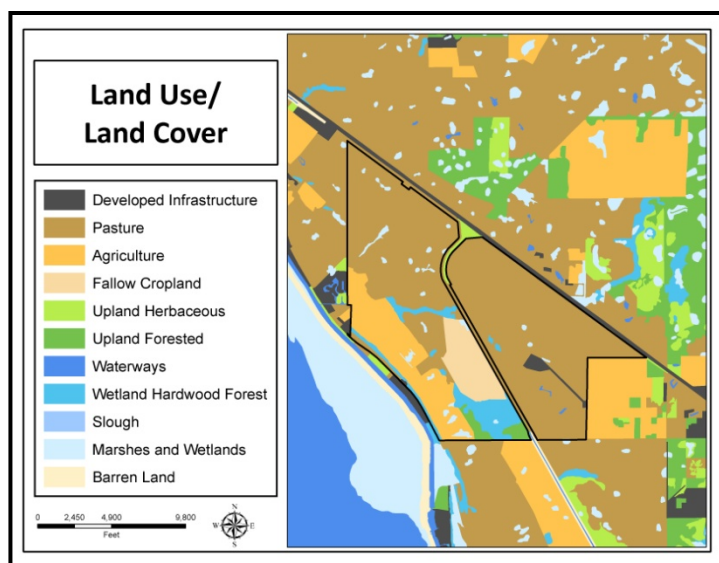
Improved pasture on the portion of the property leased for cattle grazing.



Lakeside Ranches: Land Acquisition



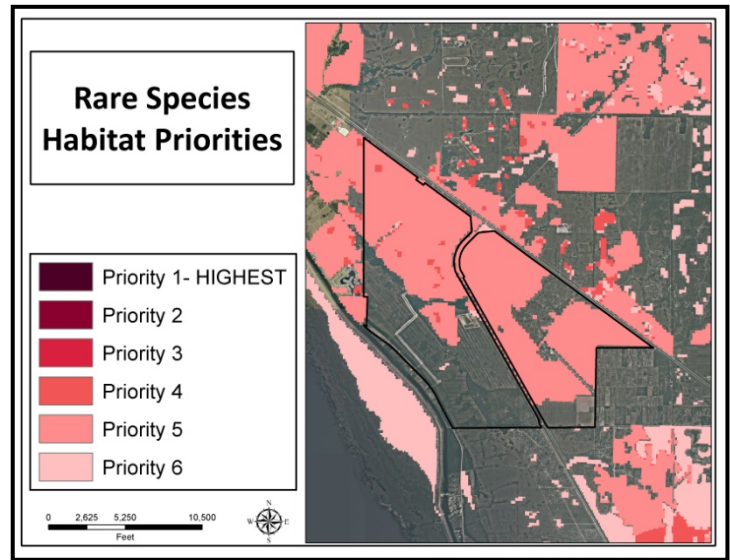
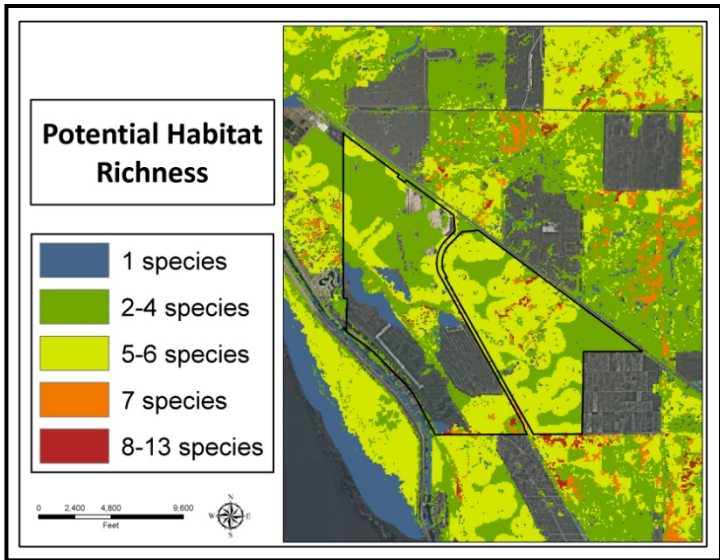
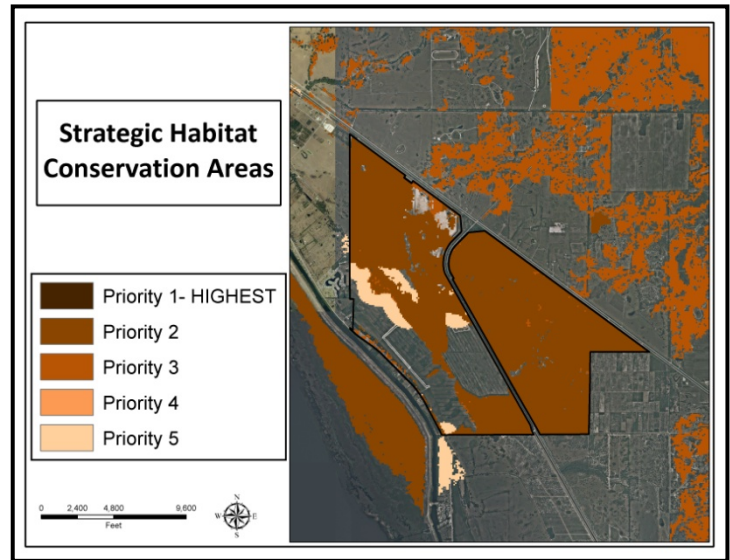
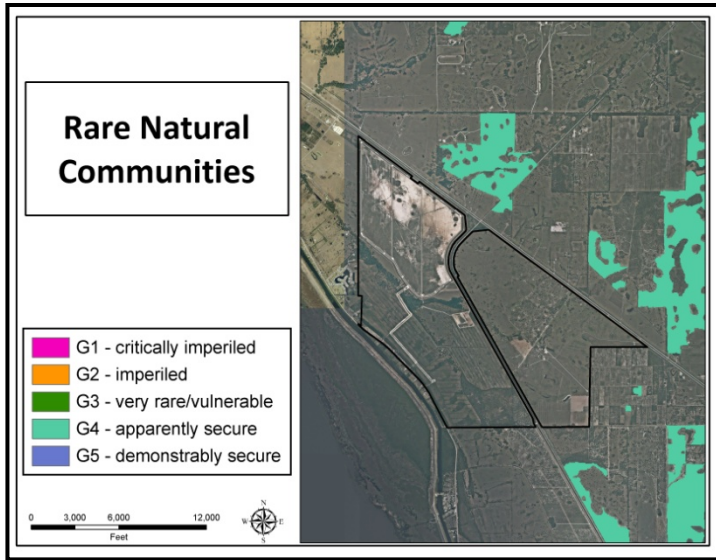
Lakeside Ranches: Land Character



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Lakeside Ranches: Land Character
(Continued)



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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

Lake Okeechobee, Assessment Unit: Lake Okeechobee Islands

Core Mission Value

Torry, Ritta, Kraemer, and Observation Islands, within Lake Okeechobee, were acquired by the District in the 1950s and 1960s after the completion of the Herbert Hoover dike and the Central and South Florida Project for flood control and protection. The land was necessary to obtain the rights necessary to maintain the water within the lake in accordance with the approved regulation schedule.

Other Resource Value

The land on Ritta, Kraemer, and Torry Islands had been used for farming between the 1920s and the 1950s. There was once a hotel operated on Ritta Island. The islands contain mostly fallow farm fields, covered in invasive and exotic plants. The areas have value for wildlife because uplands are uncommon within the lake. The endangered plant, the Okeechobee Gourd, has been found on the islands. The Arthur R. Marshall foundation has administered a program to plant pond apple trees on Torry Island.

Current Use, Management Issues

These lands are being managed as fallow fields for flood control purposes. The remoteness of these locations makes management challenging. There has been a history of unauthorized structures occasionally erected on the site.

Public Use and Recreation Value

There is an airboat port at Torry Island, and the old farm roads have been used for bicycling, jogging, and hiking. There used to be a wooden bridge that connected Torry Island to Kraemer Island, but it burned down in a muck fire in the 1970s, so now the only way to access Kraemer Island is by airboat or canoe/kayak. The public use on Torry Island is managed through a cooperative agreement with the city of Belle Glade.



Lake Okeechobee Islands, District-owned parcels are outlined in yellow. All properties were purchased with District funds.

Lake Okeechobee Islands, Torry and Kraemer Islands, Photos



Torry Island (top two photos) and Kraemer Island (bottom two photos) are heavily infested with exotic plants that moved into these fallow agricultural fields. However, the endangered Okeechobee Gourd (left) has been observed on both islands.



Lake Okeechobee Islands, Torry Island, Public Use



A chiki shelter and an informational kiosk near the entrance to Torry Island

Lake Okeechobee Islands, Ritta and Observation Islands, Photos



Observation Island.



Ritta Island during a low water period.

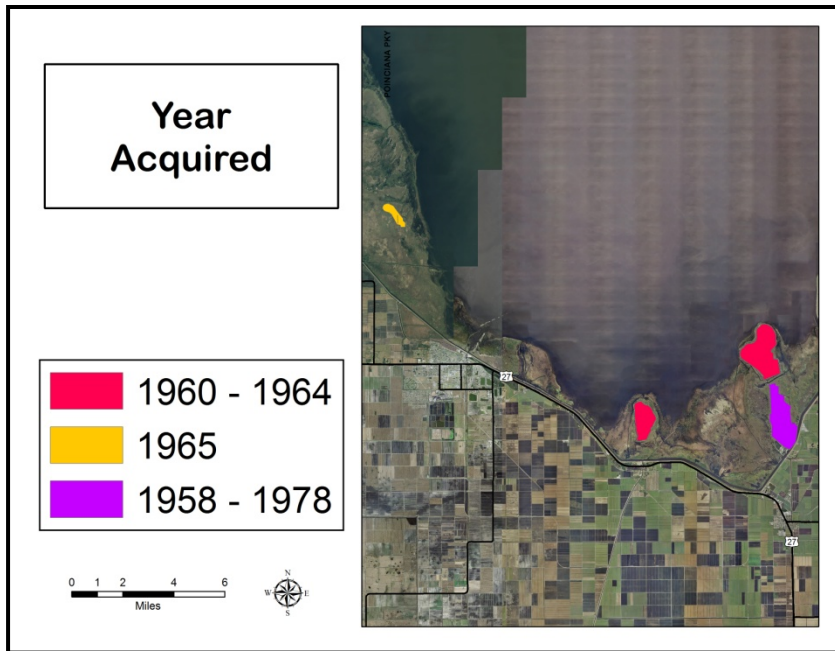


Ritta Island during a high water period.

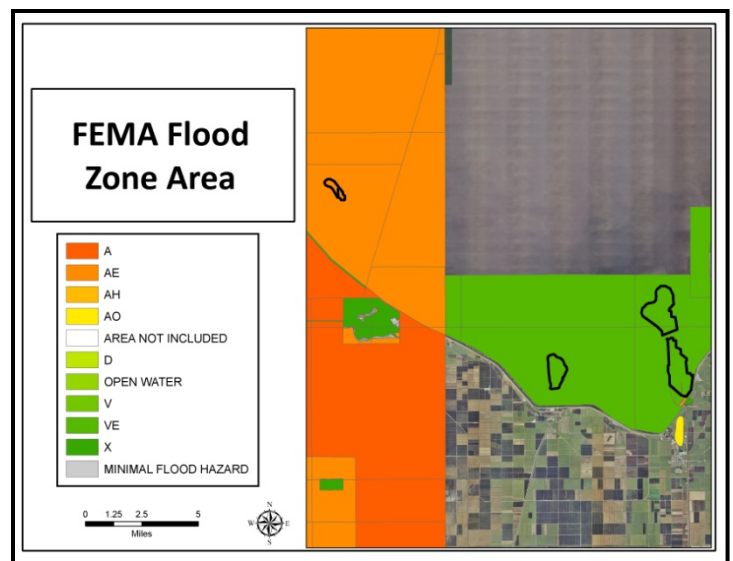
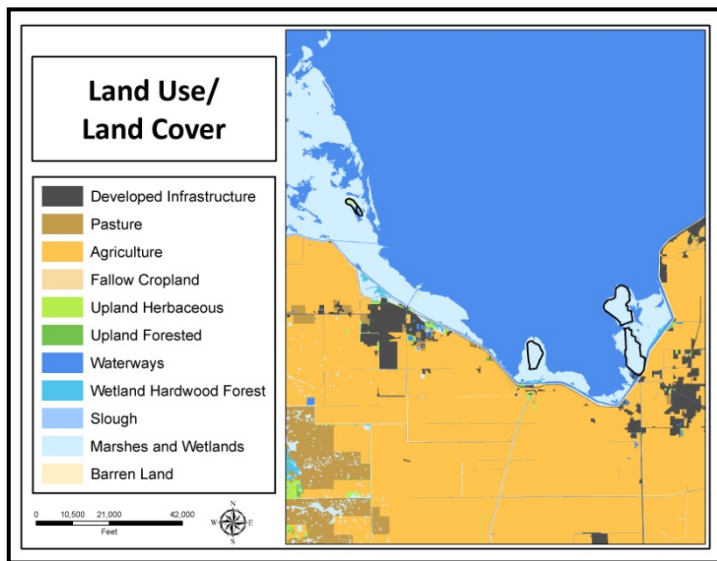


Pond apple planting plots on Ritta Island.

Lake Okeechobee Islands: Land Acquisition



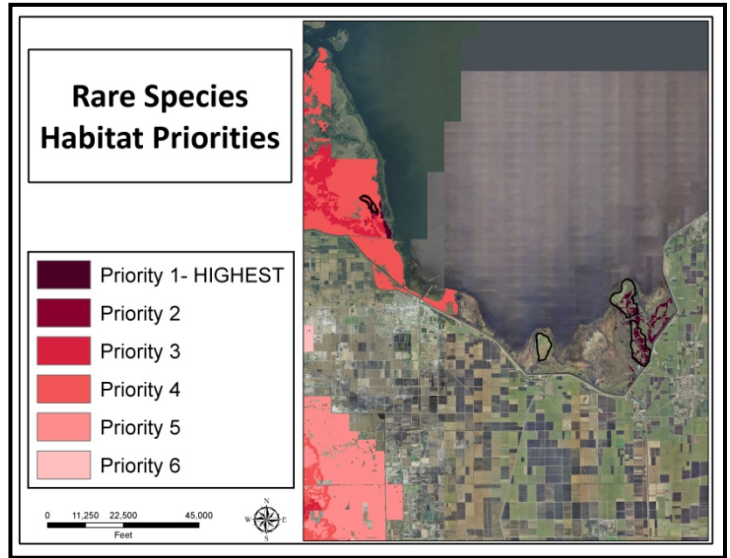
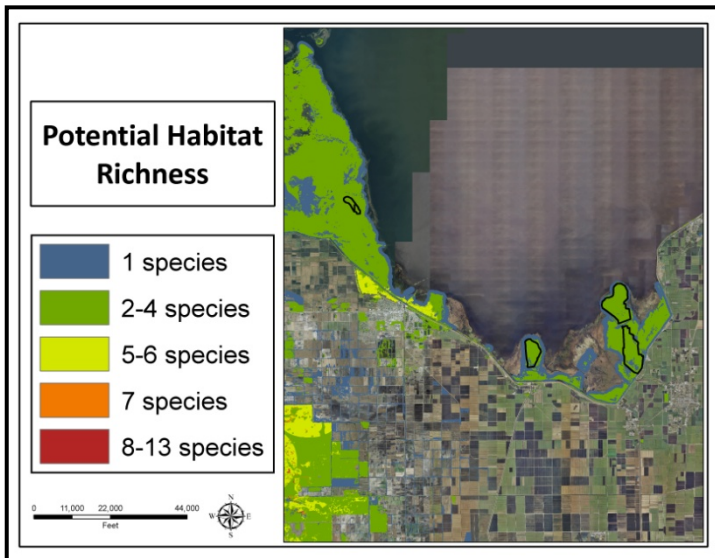
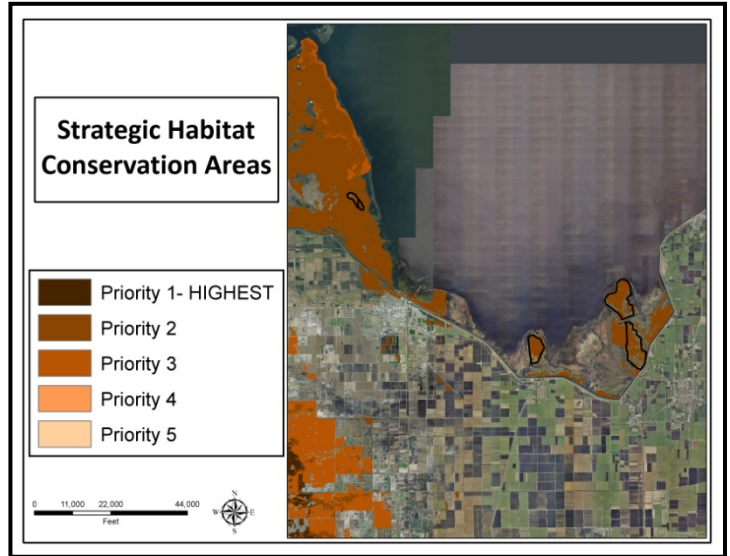
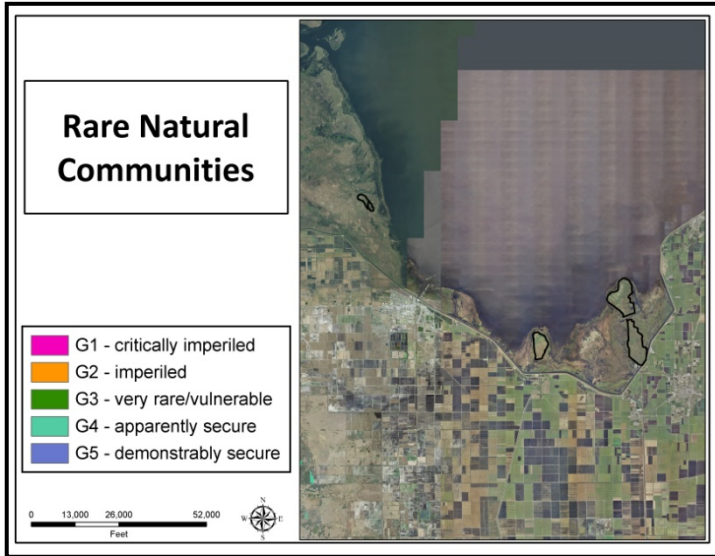
Lake Okeechobee Islands: Land Character



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Lake Okeechobee Islands: Land Character
(Continued)



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