

Lake Marion Creek and Reedy Creek

Polk and Osceola County

Area within planning boundary footprint	37,150 acres
District fee-simple ownership	12,915 acres
Other public fee-simple ownership	4,312 acres
Area under other regulatory restriction (conservation easement, platted preserve area, etc.)	7,900 acres
*acreages are estimates	

Site Overview

This area consists of extensive lowlands surrounding creeks that flow into the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes. The most significant is Reedy Creek, on the east side, which receives water from the Walt Disney World Resort and the southwestern region of the greater Orlando area. These wetlands provide water quality improvement benefits to the region, particularly after storms and during the rainy season, when water spills out of the shallow natural streambeds and sheetflows through the basin.

The Reedy Creek floodplain is joined to the broad swamps and hardwood wetlands to the west through the Intercession City assessment unit. The western units are lowlands that surround small tributaries (Snell Creek and Horse Creek) of Lake Marion Creek, a water course that connects Lake Marion to Lake Hatchineha. These creeks and forested wetlands are an important feature of the Everglades headwaters.

The District began purchasing lands within the Lake Marion Creek Project Area and Upper Reedy Creek Project Area in 1994 through the Save Our Rivers program. The majority of land was acquired between July 1994 and May 1997.

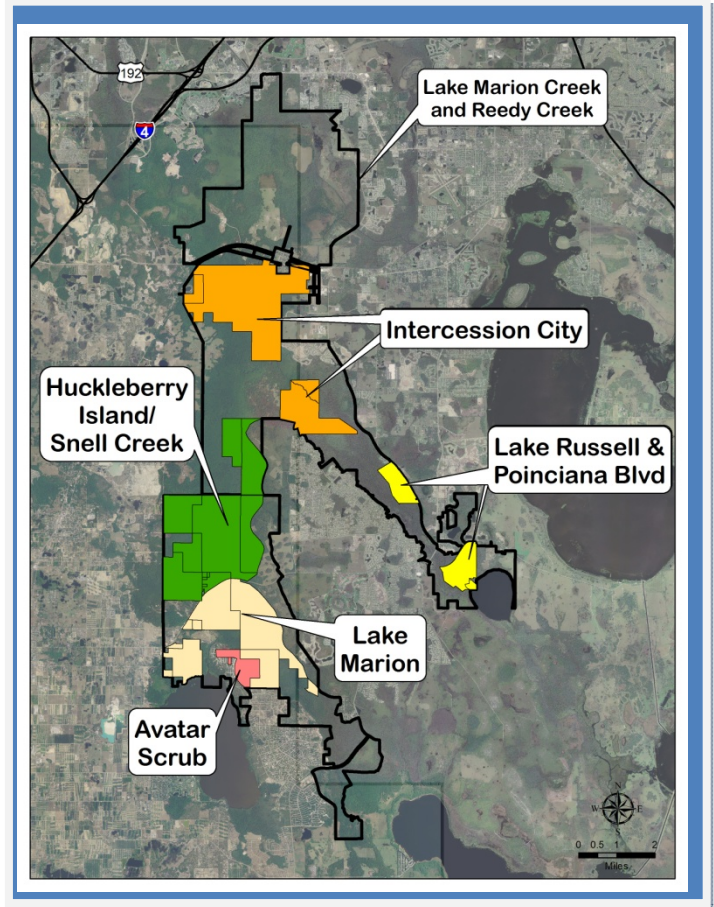
Assessment Units

Intercession City

The Intercession City unit lies south of S. Orange Blossom Trail (U.S. 17-92). The unit lies within the floodplain of Reedy Creek.

Lake Russell and Poinciana Blvd

The Lake Russell and Poiciana Blvd unit consist of two tracts within the Reedy Creek floodplain that are connected by platted preserve areas of Poinciana.



Lake Marion Creek planning boundary divided into Assessment Units

Huckleberry Island / Snell Creek

Huckleberry Island and Snell Creek contain the primary public use features, with miles of trails, picnic areas, and primitive camping sites. This unit has been established as a Wildlife Management Area and opened to hunting by the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

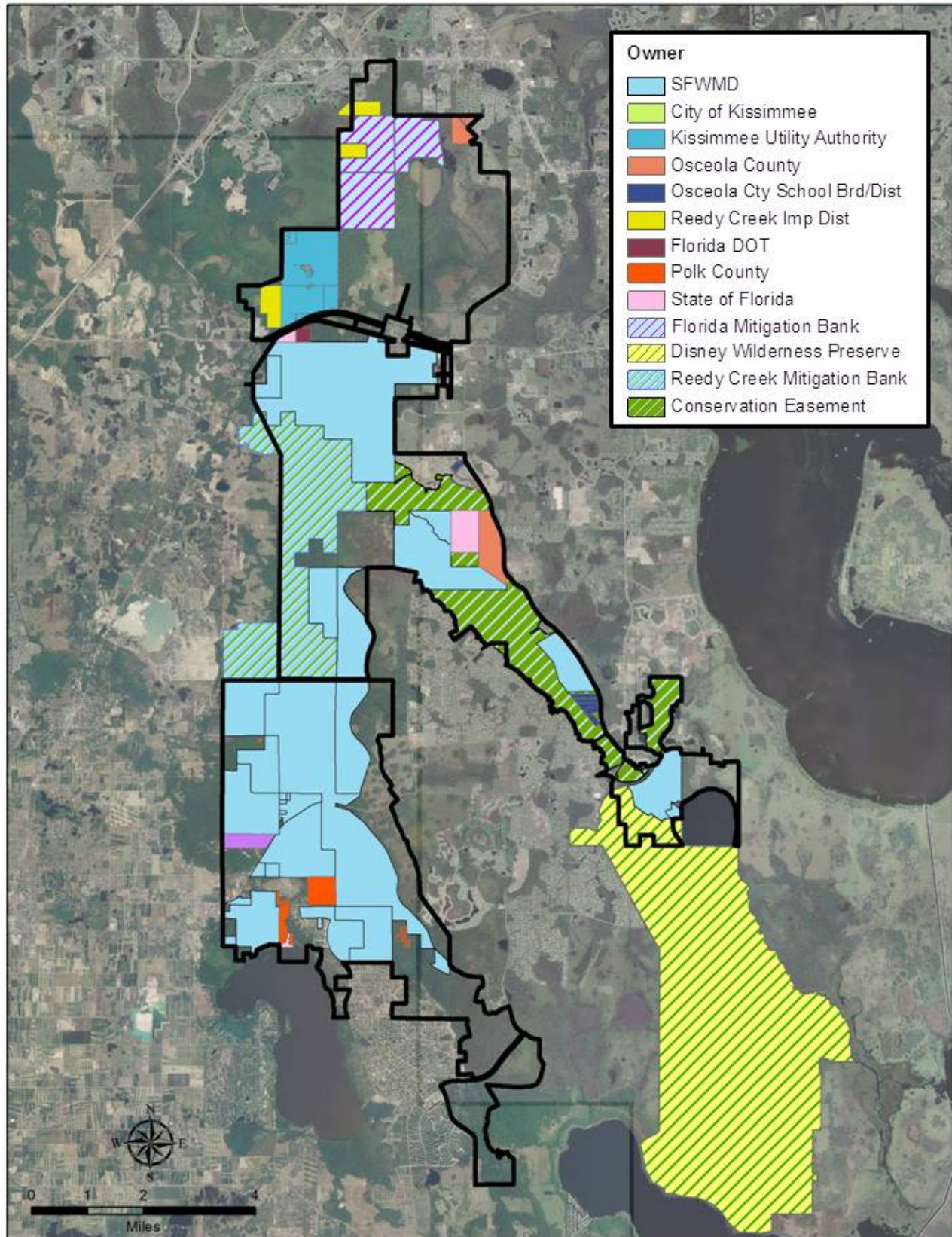
Lake Marion

The Lake Marion unit consists of District and Polk County-owned land lying south of Cypress Parkway (CR580), excluding the Avatar Scrub unit. These lands are floodplain forests and swamps, those which border Lake Marion or surround Lake Marion Creek, and are bisected by a narrow sandy ridge of scrub.

Avatar Scrub

The Avatar Scrub site is a high sand ridge of scrub with a steep forested seepage slope leading down into the Lake Marion Creek floodplain, and a cutthroat grass seepage slope on the opposite side of the ridge.

Publicly Owned Land and Protected Land in Lake Marion Creek and Reedy Creek



Lake Marion Creek and Reedy Creek

Assessment Unit: Intercession City

District fee-simple ownership – 4,033 acres

Intercession City is named after a failed land development from the 1920s real estate boom. At that time it was called InterOcean City, a development that went bust when the real estate bubble of the 20s burst. During the Depression, the site was donated to a group of orphans who had lost their original orphanage and who picked the wild huckleberries growing in the pine islands in order to survive. The orphanage became a bible college in the 40s, which closed in 1953. The District acquired the site in 1995 and 1997 under the Save Our Rivers program.

Current Use

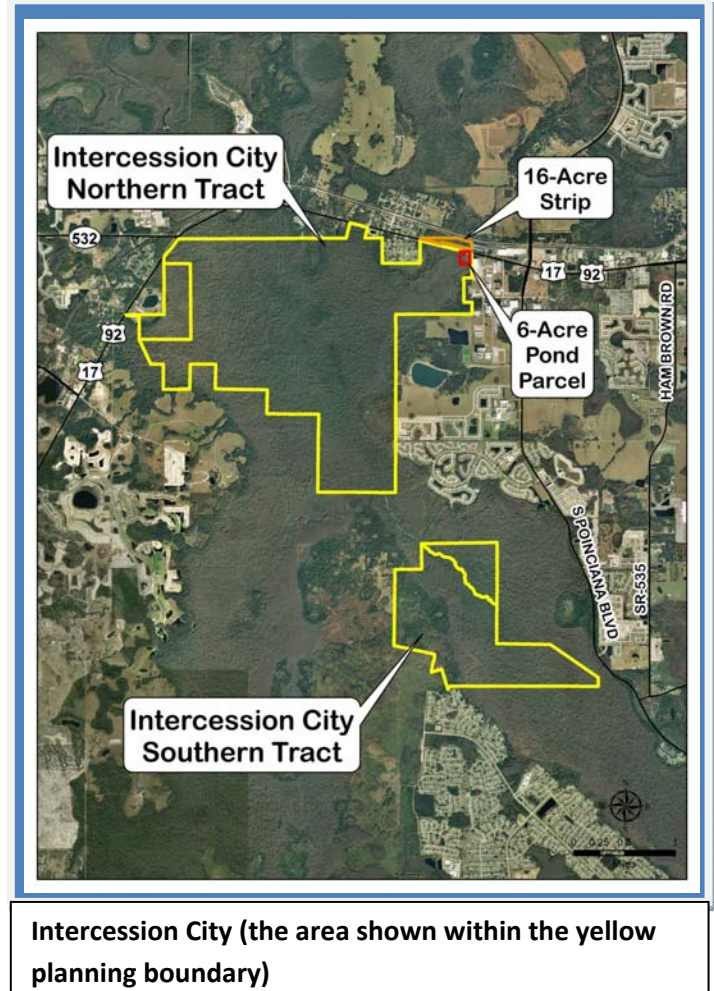
The site is being managed and maintained in its natural state and condition. There is a northern tract south of U.S. 17-92, and a southern tract north of the Poinciana community.

Core Mission Value

The site receives water that originates from the Walt Disney World Resort and other developed areas of the southwest Orlando area. Consisting of a broad and low floodplain, the site is an important flood attenuation and water quality feature. The site serves as an initial natural filter for stormwater runoff prior to entering the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes. There are two pine islands within the unit that are periodically burned through the application of prescribed fire.

Other Resource Value

The area is predominantly forested wetlands within the Reedy Creek floodplain. There are two significant pine islands, one south of the Intercession City community, and one north of the Poinciana community. The site is a landscape-scale natural system, containing both upland and wetland communities, and supports an abundance of wildlife. The site is an important wildlife corridor serving as a nexus between the western Lake Marion Creek system to the southwest, the Reedy creek floodplain to the southeast, and the Reedy Creek Improvement District lands and the Walt Disney World Resort to the north.



Management Issues

The biggest management issue is keeping exotic species under control within the floodplain. Accessing the interior areas of the swamp is difficult. The proximity of the pine island to the Intercession City community and U.S. 17-92 limits the conditions under which it can be burned.

Public Use and Recreation Value

There is a public access trailhead to the northernmost pine island in the unit. There are hiking trails that extend down into the swamp. The distance that one may travel into the swamp changes with the seasonal fluctuations of water levels. The trailhead is used frequently by residents of the intercession city community.

Intercession City, northern tract, photos



Intercession City trailhead



The pine island at intercession City, looking south towards the swamp. (28 ° 15' 22"N, 81° 30' 16"W)



Intercession City pine island, ground view (left); and the trail as it dips into the swamp in the wet season (right).



Burning the Intercession City pine island, the ecological health of the pine islands are dependent upon the periodic application of prescribed fire.

Intercession City, southern tract, photos



Pinelands in the southern Intercession City tract



Looking south, southern tract, a very diverse system: wet prairie towards the top, pinelands and cypress at center, oak hammock at upper right, and the mixed hardwood / cypress floodplain swamp at left. (28 ° 12' 13"N, 81 ° 30' 04"W)

Intercession City, Individual Parcel Assessments

Pond Parcel - 6 acre parcel south of US 17-92, and a

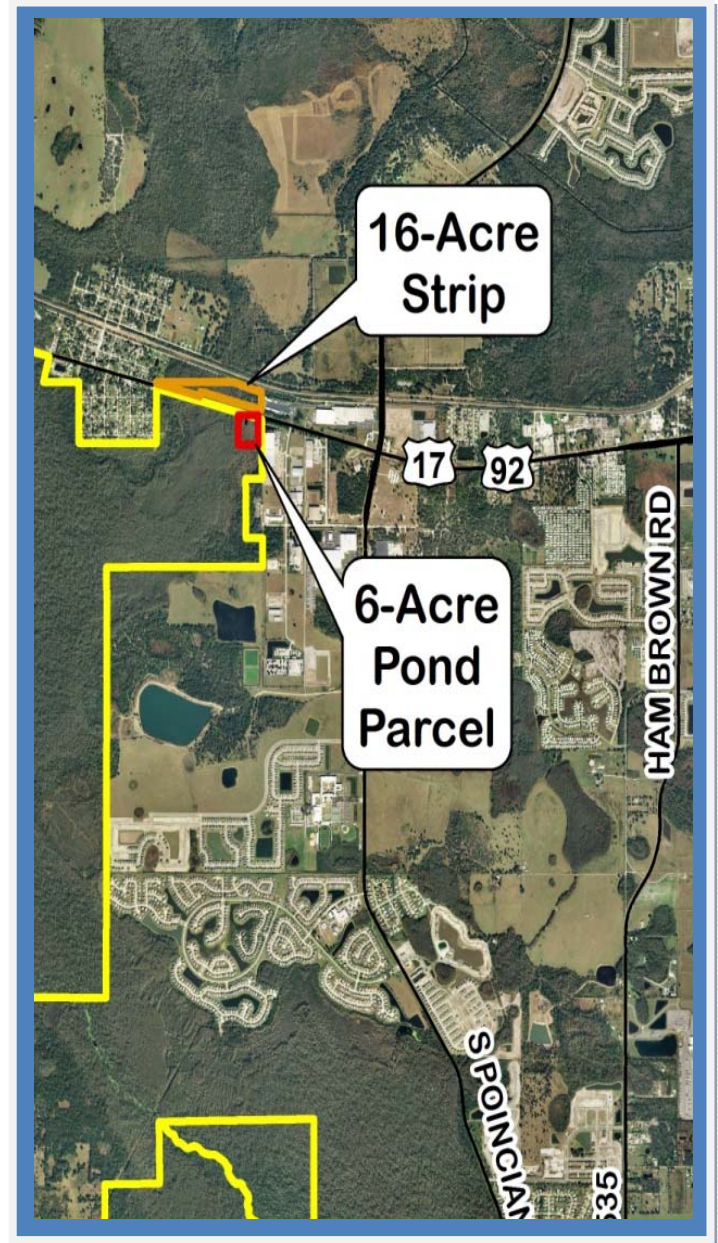
When the Intercession City tract was acquired by the District, it included a 6 acre parcel south of U.S. 17-92 (the Pond Parcel) that had previously been cleared, probably as site preparation for development. There is a pond in the northwest corner of the site. There is commercial land use to its east.

The Pond Parcel is highly disturbed, having been previously cleared. The current understory is a mix of exotic and native grasses, and periodically inundated with water from the swamp to the west. The site provides some degree of benefit as a buffer between the commercial land use to the east and the wetlands and small streambed immediately to the west. The site does have restoration potential. Additionally, grassy areas are rare in the predominantly forested wetland floodplain of Reedy Creek and are generally highly utilized by wildlife, particularly during high water stages.

16 acre strip between Old Tampa Hwy and US 17

The Intercession City tract also included a 16 acre strip of land between U.S. 17-92 and Old Tampa Highway. This parcel consists of a small streambed, surrounded by a mixed cypress / hardwood forested wetland. There is a 4.3 acre oak hammock on the east side of the strip, across U.S. 17-92 from the Pond Parcel. This is a moderately disturbed hammock that may be accessed from Old Tampa Highway to its north. There is commercial land use to its east and residential to its west. The parcel tapers to a wedge on its western end.

The small streambed near the middle of the site conveys water to the northeastern section of the Intercession City tract. The site has potential as a wildlife corridor link between the Reedy Creek and Shingle Creek floodplains, but such a link could be severed if the private agricultural lands immediately to the north were developed. Some species would likely use the Old Tampa Highway and the adjacent rail corridor to bridge the two natural areas in such an event.



Pond Parcel - 6 acre parcel south of US 17



The mostly cleared 6-acre pond parcel



Aerial view of the cleared 6-acre pond parcel (28 ° 15' 25"N, 81 ° 29' 46"W)

16 acre strip between Old Tampa Hwy and US 17



Roadside view of the 16-acre strip looking north from U.S. 17-92

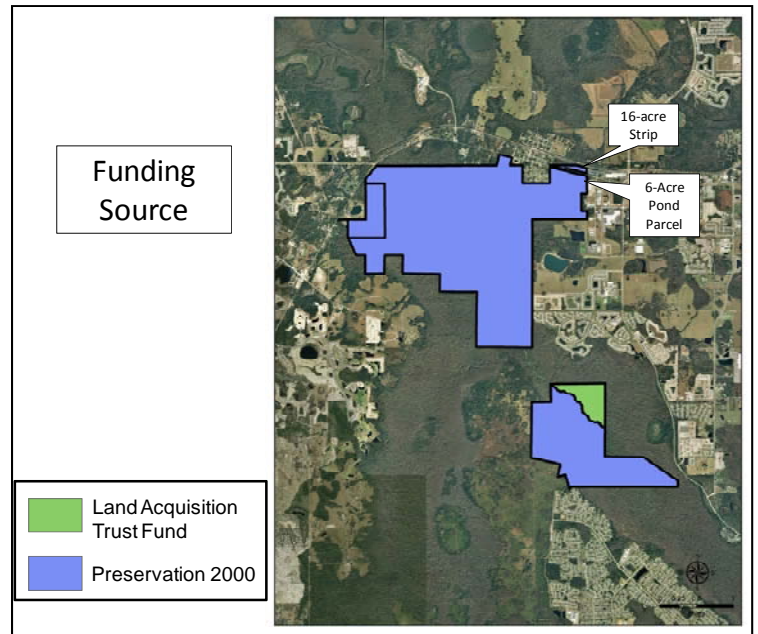
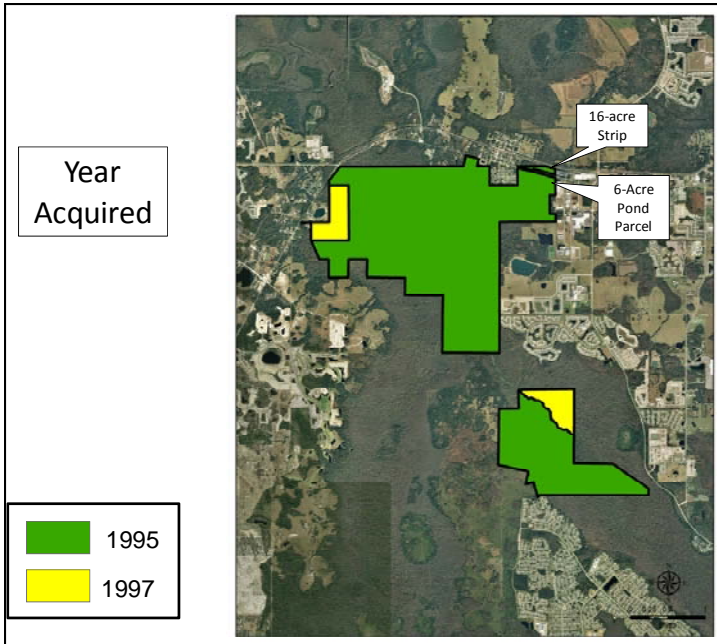


Aerial view of the 16-acre strip (28° 15' 32"N, 81° 29' 46"W)

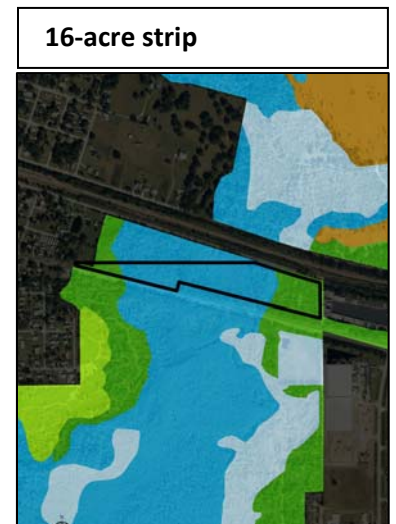
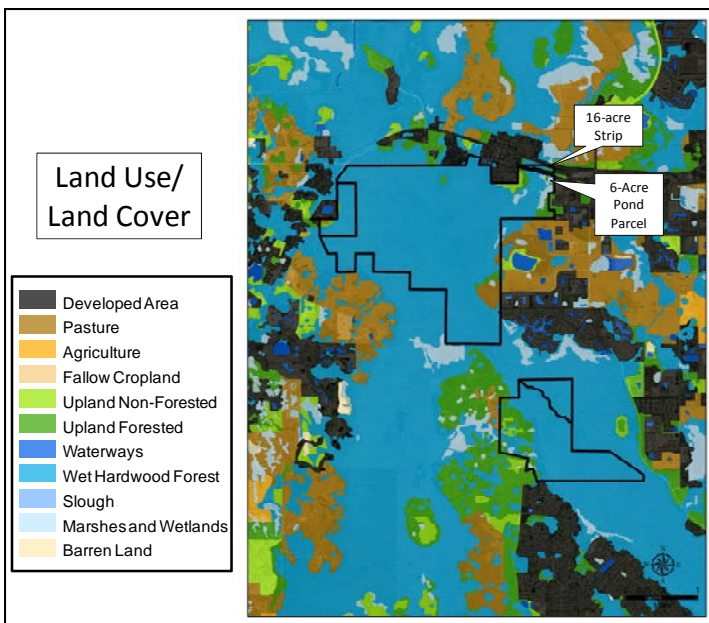


Roadside view of the 16-acre strip looking north from Old Tampa Highway

Intercession City, Land Acquisition



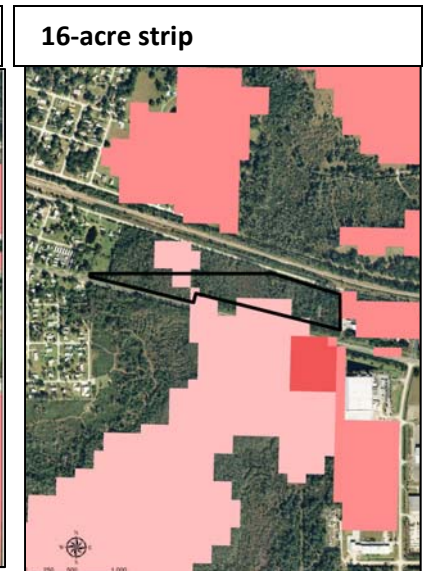
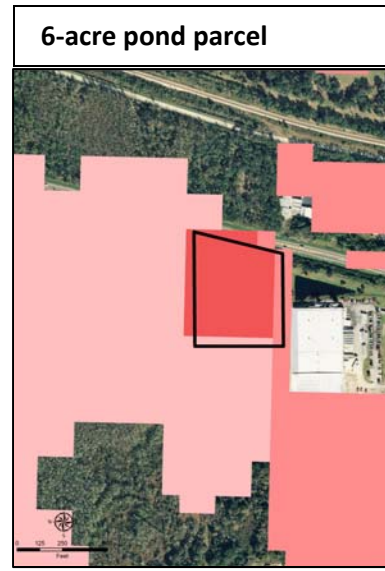
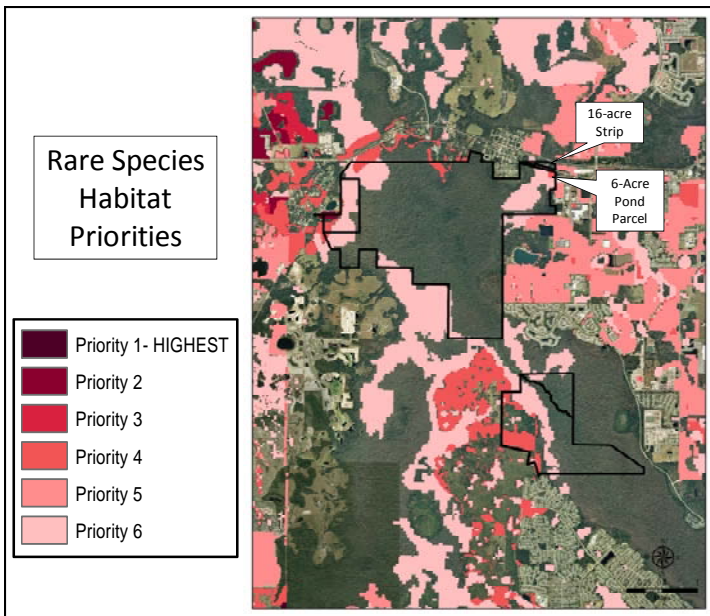
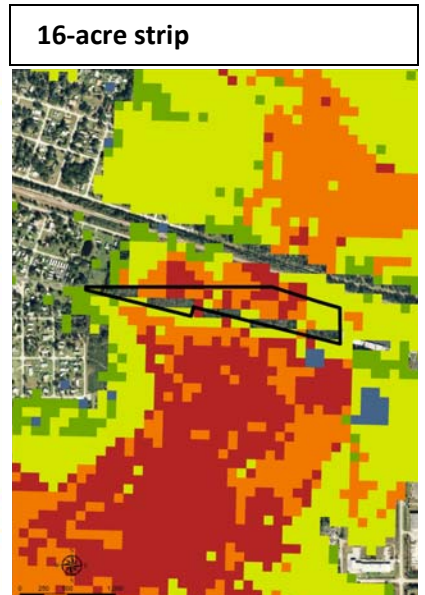
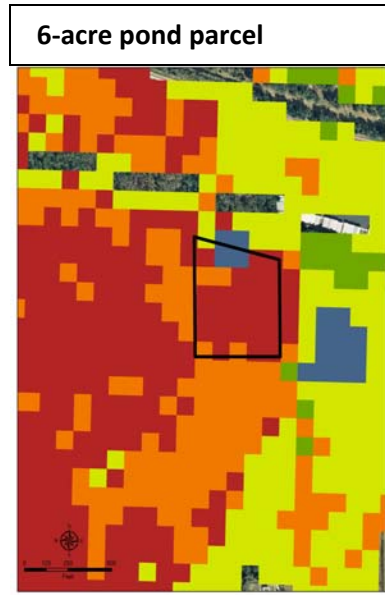
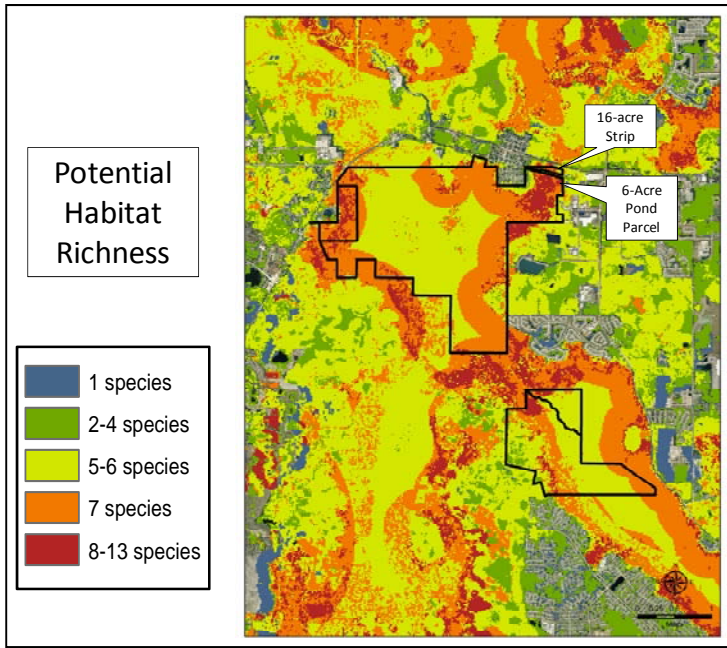
Intercession City, Land Character



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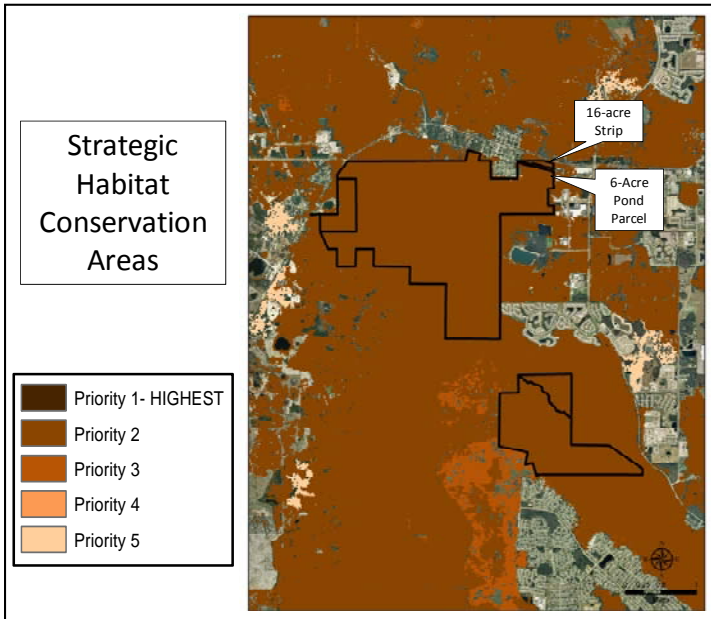
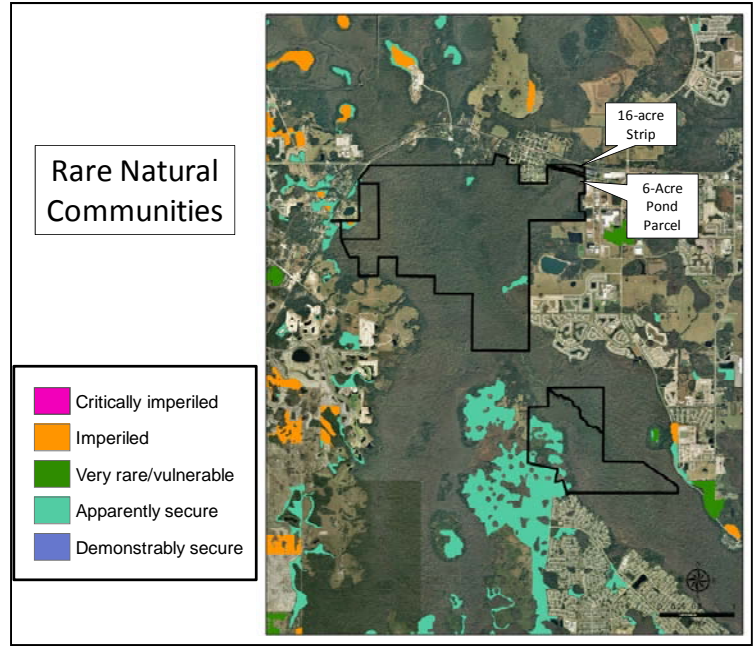
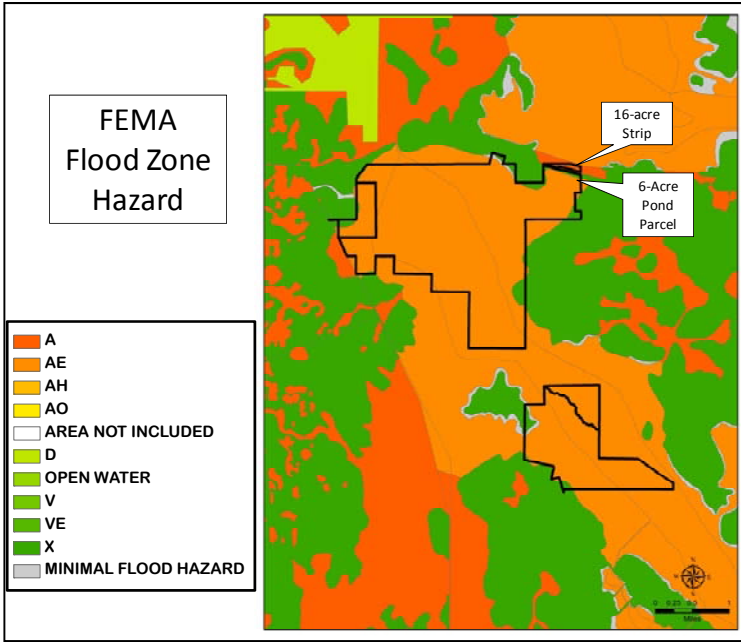
Intercession City, Land Character (Continued)



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Intercession City, Land Character (Continued)



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Lake Marion Creek and Reedy Creek
Assessment Unit: Lake Russell and Poinciana Blvd Tracts

District fee-simple ownership – 871 acres

These two tracts lie along the Reedy Creek floodplain, on the eastern side of the Poinciana community. The Poinciana community was an early example of the large-scale planned urban development that became widespread in the 1990s. Poinciana was platted in the mid 1970s, so it pre-dated modern land use rules. Most of the floodplain was dedicated to preservation through the platting of the development. The District’s land acquisition effort focused on the floodplain parcels that were not platted preserves.

Current Use

The two tracts are being managed and maintained in their natural state and condition. The Lake Russell tract is being utilized by the Osceola County School Board as an environmental and natural resource education center for County students. The School Board conducts educational programs throughout the school year as well as a summer camp.

Core Mission Value

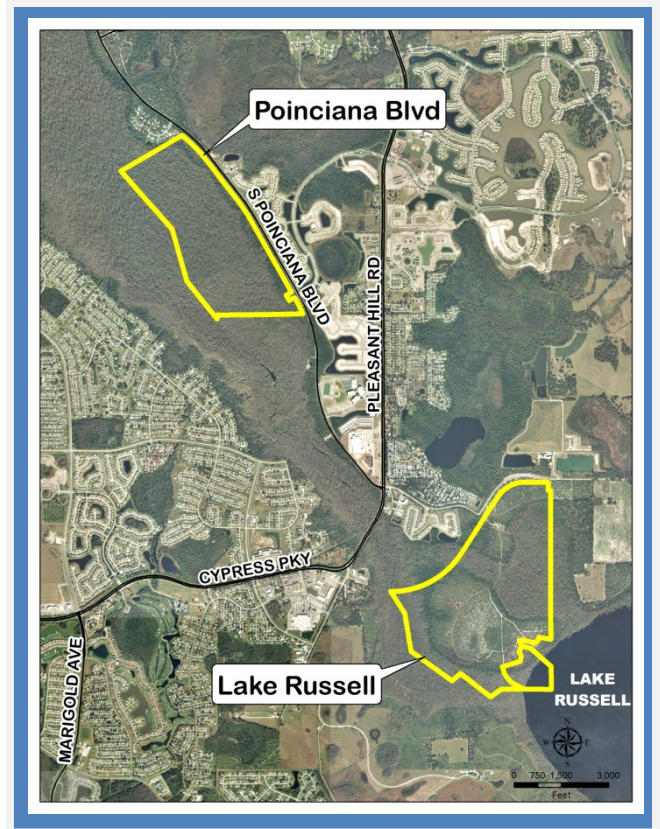
The Poinciana Boulevard tract, together with the adjacent tracts preserved through the development of Poinciana, helps protect the floodplain of Reedy Creek from direct stormwater discharges from adjacent developments. The protection of the floodplain enables the creek to fluctuate naturally.

Lake Russell has a natural shoreline all the way around, with no direct stormwater discharges from residential or commercial development. The Lake Russell tract had been platted for residential development at the time the District acquired it.

Other Resource Value

The Poinciana Boulevard tract is predominantly a cypress swamp, but also contains a 300’ wide strip of pines between the swamp and Poinciana Boulevard.

The Lake Russell tract is an isolated island of scrub, dry prairie, scrubby flatwood, and a fringing seepage slope; all of which is surrounded by the Reedy Creek floodplain swamp. There are a number of rare and endemic scrub species present on site, and rare pitcher plants may be found on the seepage slopes. Gopher tortoises are



The Poinciana Blvd and Lake Russell Tracts

Year Acquired: 1995

Funding Source: Preservation 2000

present. The Lake Russell shoreline contains a large wood stork rookery.

Management Issues

Accessing the swamp in the Poinciana Tract to conduct land management activities, primarily exotic species control, is difficult since it is a swamp that rarely dries down. The proximity of the 300’ wide strip of pines to Poinciana Blvd limits the conditions under which it may be burned.

The District conducts the resource management activities on the Lake Russell tract, while the School Board conducts facility maintenance.

Public Use and Recreation Value

The Lake Russell tract is operated by the Osceola County School Board as an educational facility for Osceola County students. The Poinciana Blvd. tract is open to the public for short hikes through an access gate on off Poinciana Blvd.

Poinciana Blvd. tract, photos



The Poinciana Blvd tract from Poinciana Blvd., it's a 300' deep pineland that drops off quickly to the cypress swamp



Cypress swamp within the Reedy Creek floodplain at the Poinciana Blvd. Tract



Reedy Creek at the Poinciana Blvd. tract

Lake Russell tract, photos



Native lopsided Indian grass within the pine flatwoods of the Lake Russell tract



Scrubby flatwoods within the Lake Russell Tract

Lake Russell tract, photos



Cypress knees on Reedy Creek at the Lake Russell tract



Cypress on the Lake Russell shoreline



Carnivorous pitcher plants on the seepage slope between the scrub and the swampy floodplain



The woodstork rookery along the Lake Russell shoreline



A wood duck nest box on Reedy Creek



Lichen growing on oak roots within the scrub

Lake Russell tract, Public Use / Education

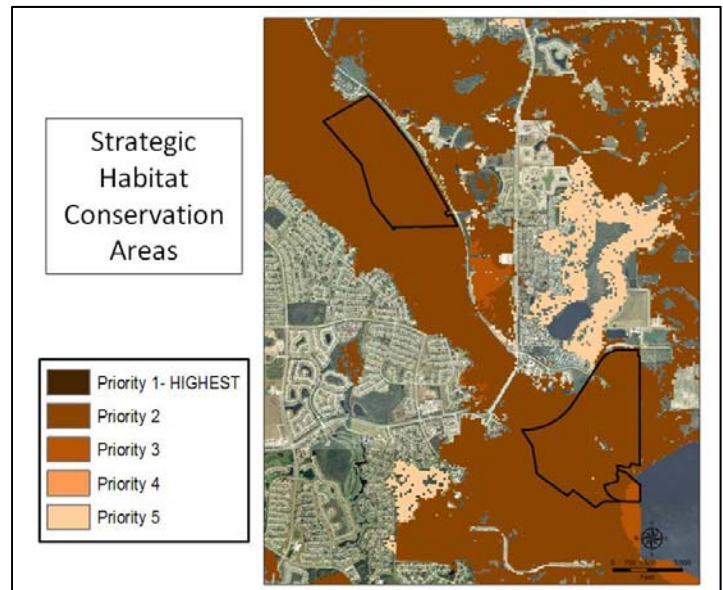
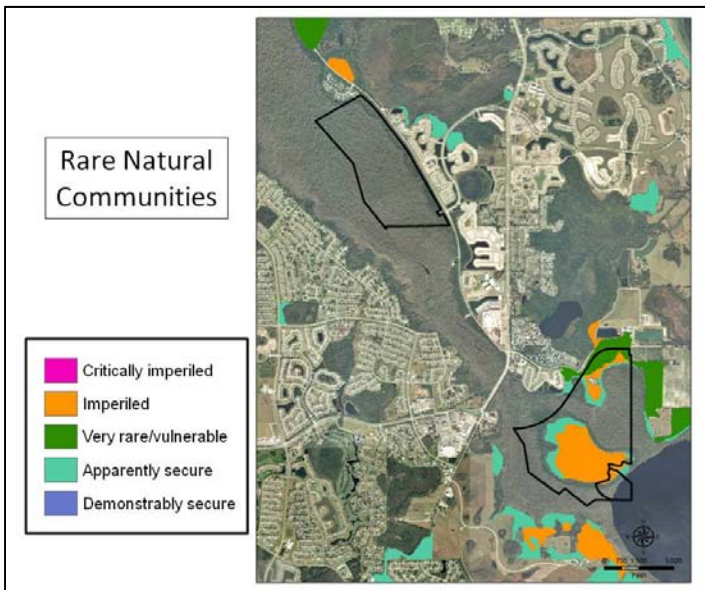
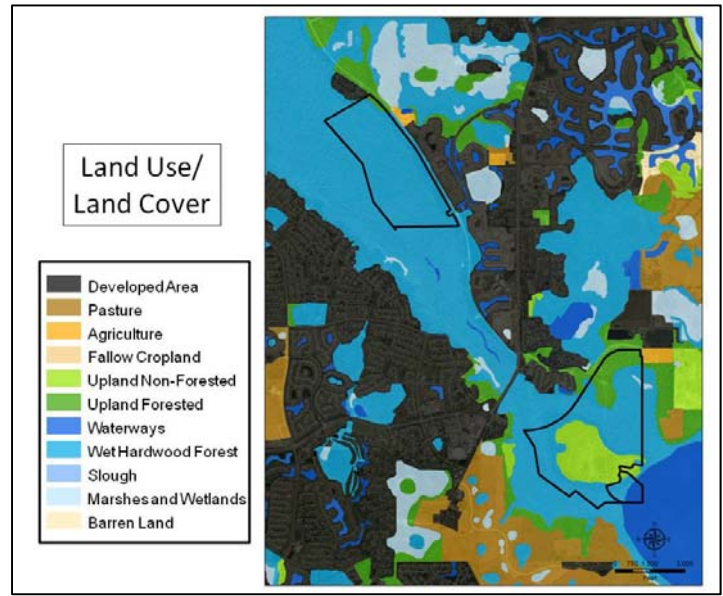
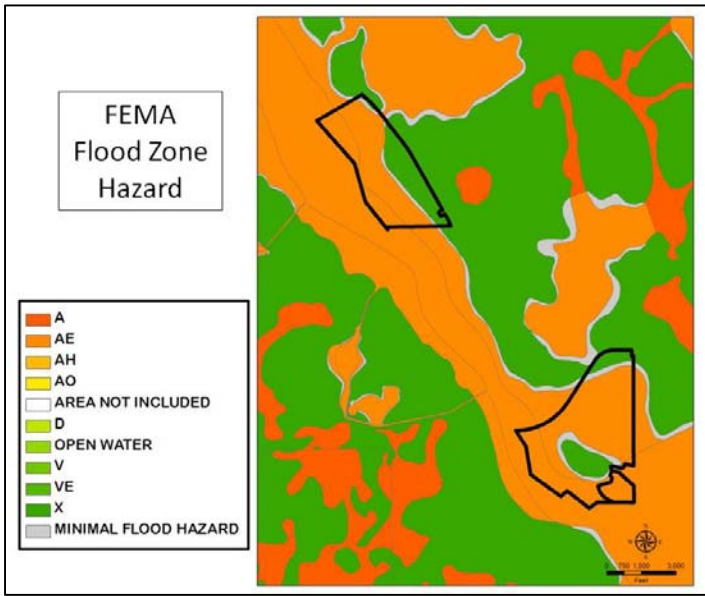


Classroom facilities on the Lake Russell tract



Osceola County students learning about scrub ecology

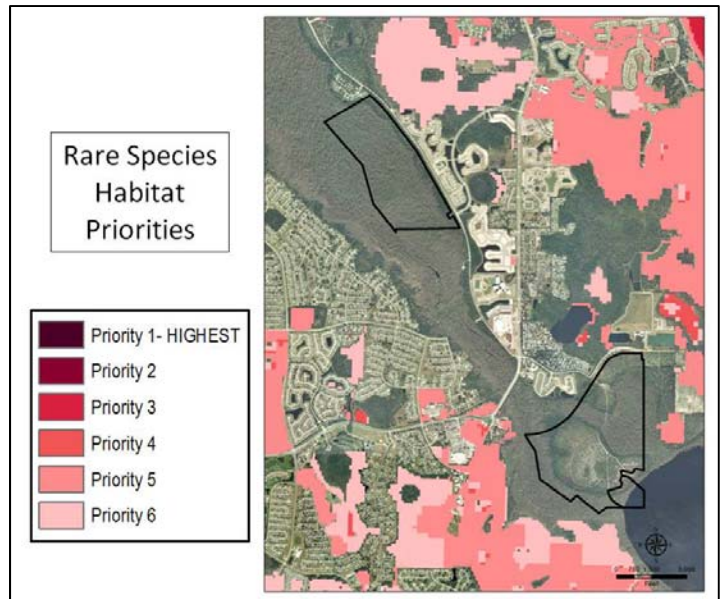
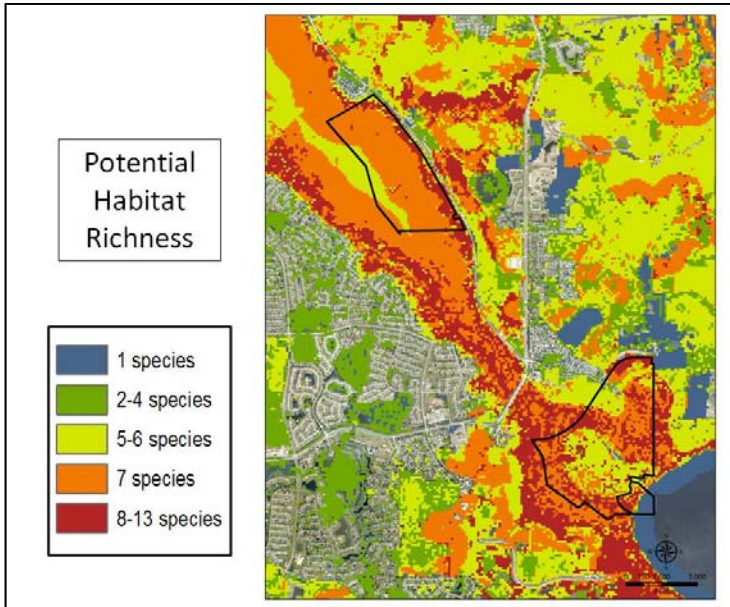
Lake Marion Creek and Reedy Creek: Lake Russell and Poinciana Blvd Land Character



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Lake Marion Creek and Reedy Creek: Lake Russell and Poinciana Blvd Land Character (Continued)



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Lake Marion Creek and Reedy Creek

Assessment Unit: Huckleberry Island / Snell Creek Creek

District fee-simple ownership – 4,670 acres

Current Use

The site is being managed and maintained in its natural state and condition. This assessment unit has been established as part of the Lake Marion Creek Wildlife Management Area by FWC through a cooperative agreement with the District. The District is the principle resource manager on the property and the Commission manages the public hunting program and handles wildlife issues.

Core Mission Value

The site primarily consists of the low broad floodplain swamp of Snell Creek, the main tributary of Lake Marion Creek. Snell Creek receives water from several residential communities and large agricultural areas. The site provides significant flood attenuation and water quality benefits (*i.e.* natural filtration and water storage within the 6,000 acre swamp).

Other Resource Value

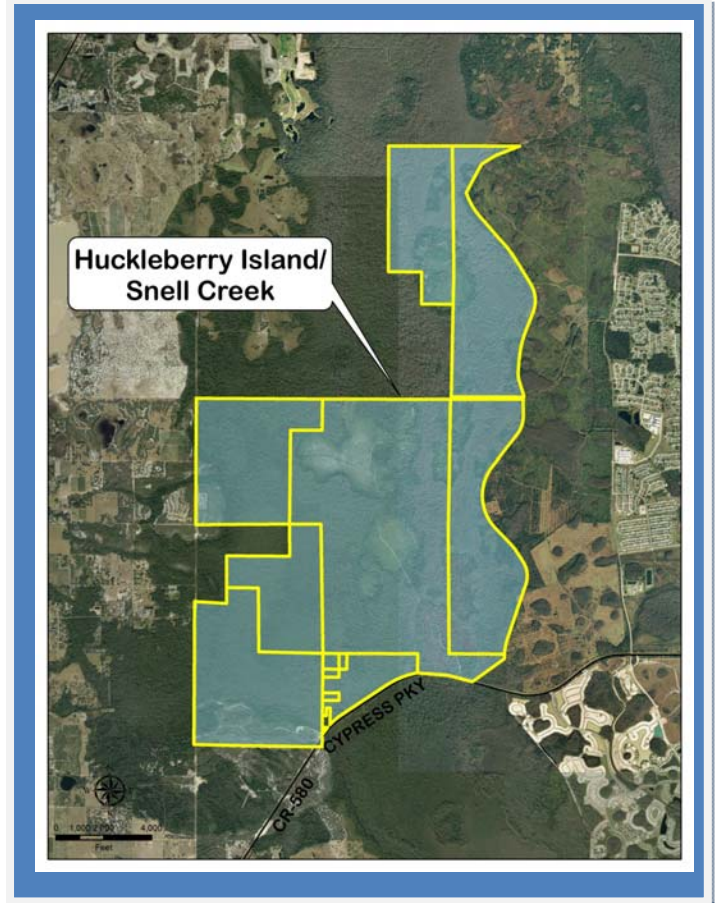
The site contains scrub and scrubby flatwoods within the southwestern portion of the site, which contains rare and endemic native plants. There are four pine islands on the eastern side, which offer substantial benefit to wildlife and contain many herbaceous plants and wildflowers.

Management Issues

Access to interior portions of the swamp is difficult, so the presence of exotic plant species must be monitored aerielly. There is a power easement on the western side of the property that is a source of exotic species infestation, yet the interior of the swamp is in good condition. The pine islands and scrubby flatwoods are periodically maintained through the application of prescribed fire.

Public Use and Recreation Value

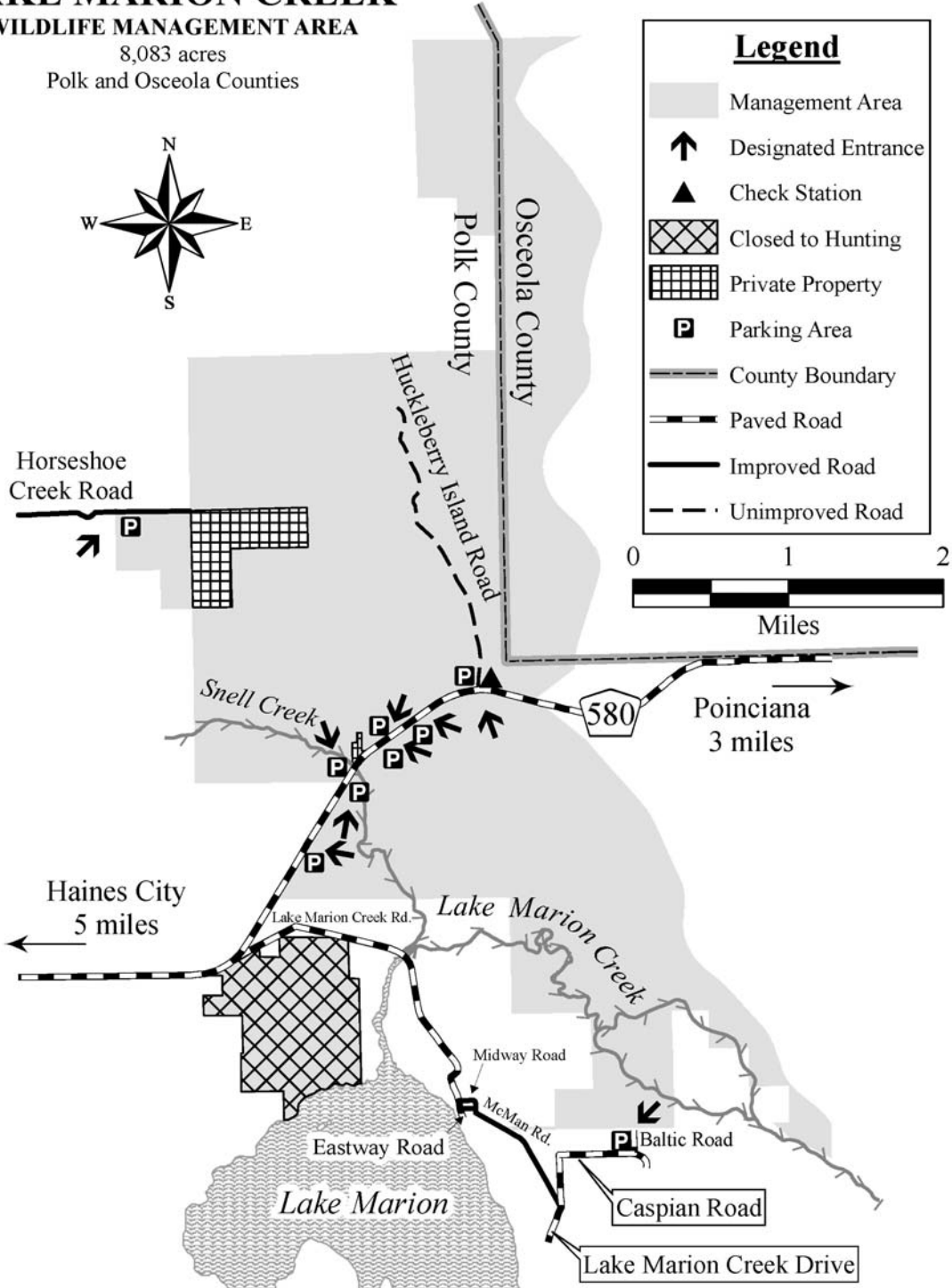
Hunting, primitive camping, bicycling, and hiking are popular activities on the site. There are three public access points north of Cypress Parkway, and one on the south side of Horseshoe Creek Road.



Huckleberry Island / Snell Creek (the area shown within the yellow planning boundary). District-owned parcels are blue.

The Lake Marion Creek Wildlife Management Area, established by FWC

**LAKE MARION CREEK
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA**
8,083 acres
Polk and Osceola Counties



**Lake Marion Creek and Reedy Creek:
Huckleberry Island and Snell Creek, photos**



A prescribed fire on Huckleberry Island (upper left), wildflowers are abundant at Huckleberry Island (above), the Snell Creek floodplain swamp (left), and the Snell Creek scrubby flatwood (below).



Lake Marion Creek and Reedy Creek: Snell Creek and Huckleberry Island, Public Use



Primitive camping at Huckleberry Island

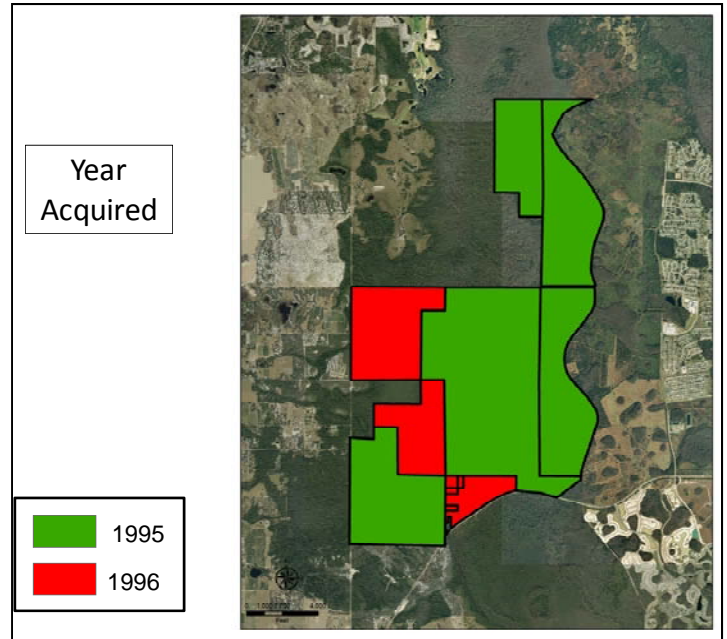
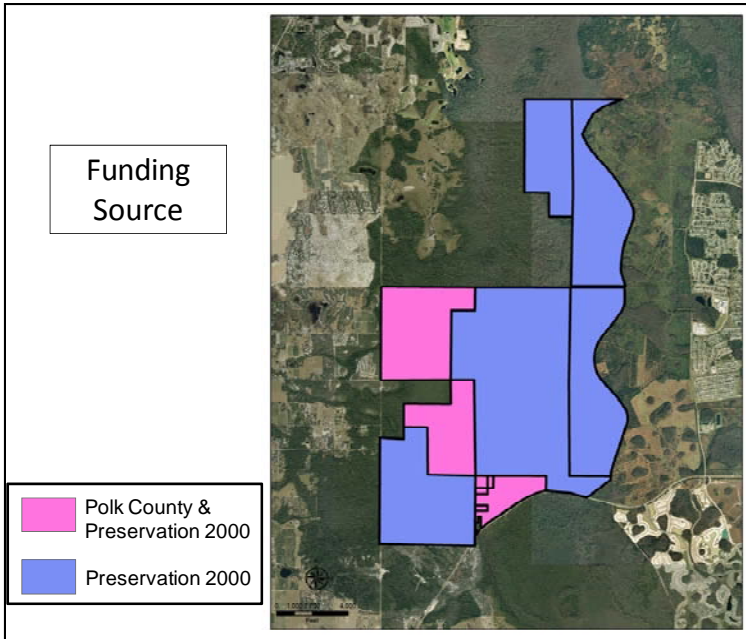


The main trail at Huckleberry Island

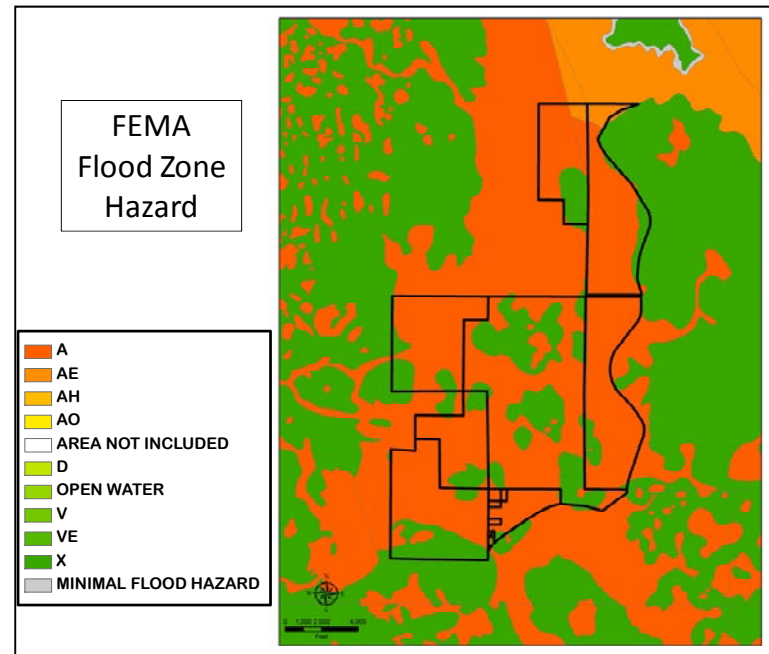
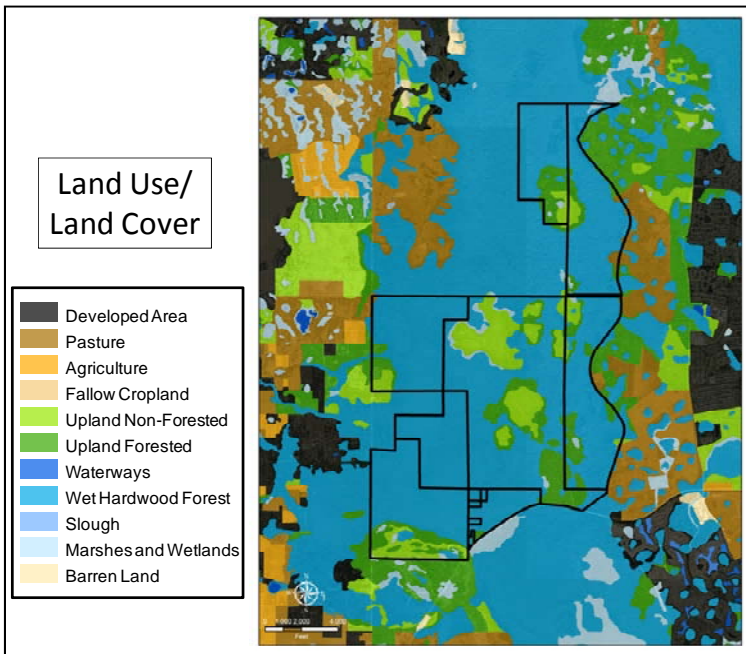


The Snell Creek trailhead

Lake Marion Creek and Reedy Creek: Snell Creek and Huckleberry Is., Land Acquisition



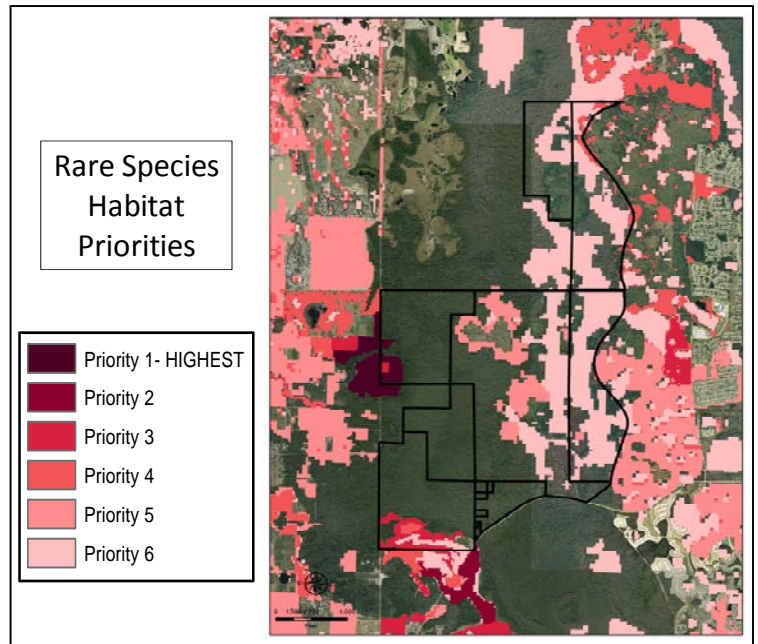
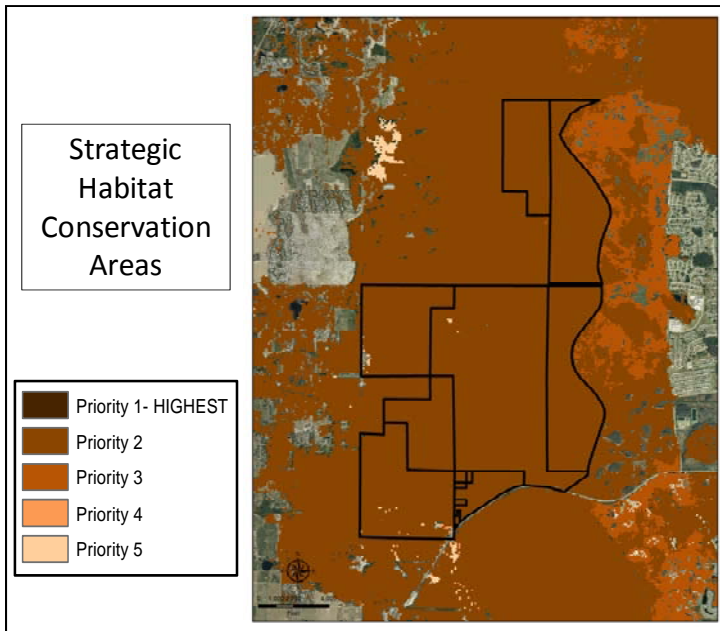
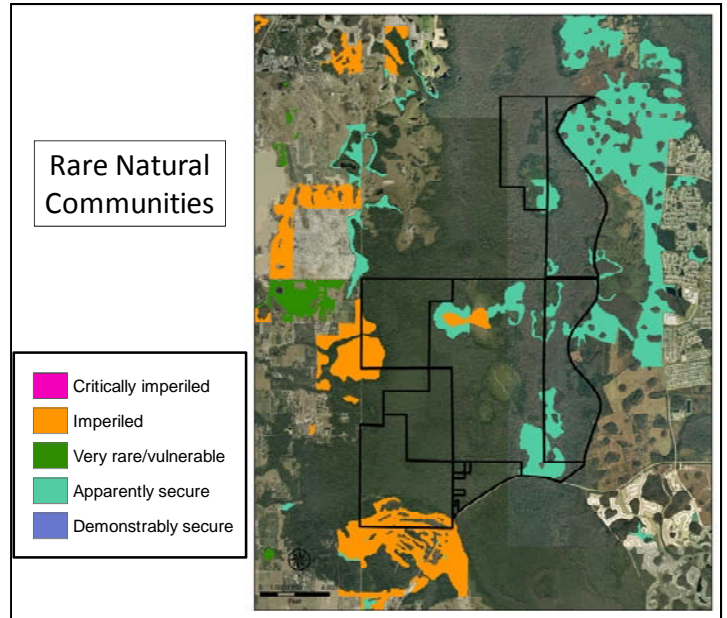
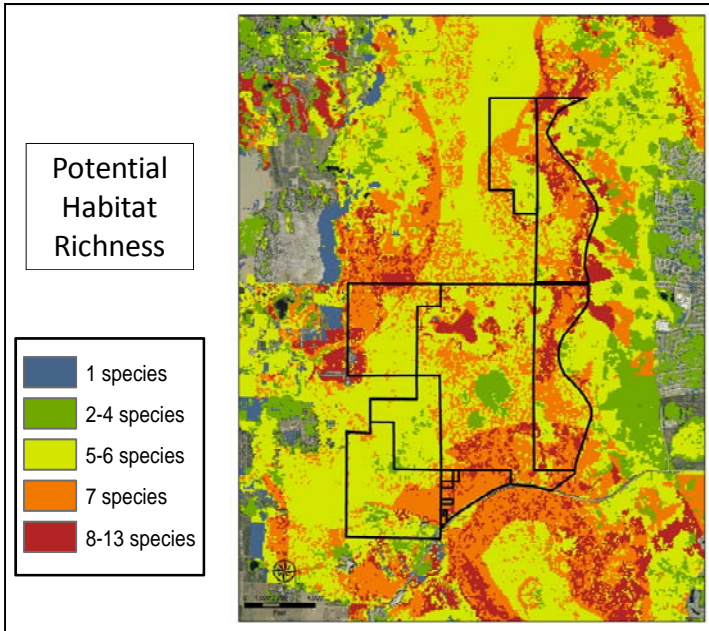
Lake Marion Creek and Reedy Creek: Snell Creek and Huckleberry Is., Land Character



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Snell Creek and Huckleberry Is., Land Character (Continued)



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Lake Marion Creek and Reedy Creek

Assessment Unit: Lake Marion

District fee-simple ownership – 2,999 acres

Lake Marion Creek flows from Lake Marion to Lake Hatchineha. Snell Creek joins Lake Marion Creek about halfway along its course. The District acquired several parcels through the Save Our Rivers program to protect the remaining floodplain. A high ridge of scrub runs in a northwest to southeast direction through the site. Polk County’s Environmental Lands Program has also acquired lands within the area. The District and Polk County executed an agreement in 1999 through which the District manages the jointly acquired sites in Lake Marion Creek and Polk County manages the SUMICA property on the northeast shore of Lake Walk-in-Water. Additionally, Polk County manages the properties within the Lake Marion Creek area that were solely acquired by the County.

Current Use

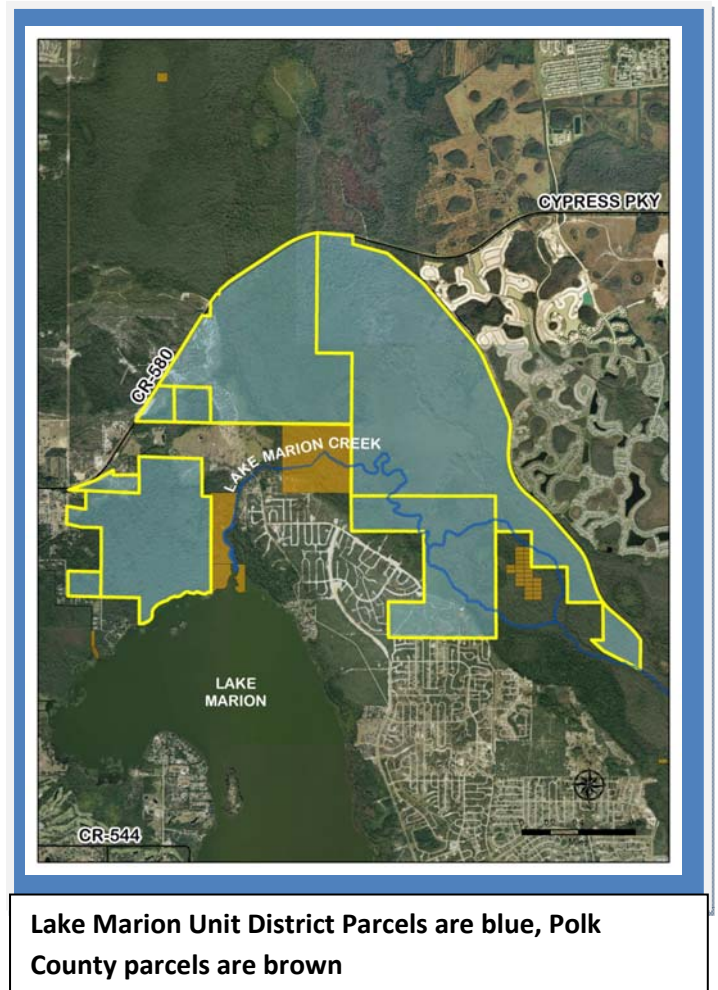
The site is being managed and maintained in its natural state and condition. The District is the principle resource manager on the property, and the Commission manages the public hunting program and wildlife issues.

Core Mission Value

The site primarily consists of the floodplain swamp of Lake Marion Creek, the littoral swamp on the north shore of Lake Marion, and a high scrub ridge. There has been significant residential development in the area over the last 15 years, preserving the floodplain of the river provides a buffer between developed areas and the river. In addition, the floodplain swamp provides water quality improvements through sheetflow and filtration, and helps attenuate potential flood damages.

Other Resource Value

The scrub ridge contains many rare and endemic native plants. There is also an area within the swamp that contains one of only a couple known sites in Florida of the broad-leaved grass *Pharus Lappulaceus*. The site is an important wildlife corridor link between the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes and the Reedy Creek swamp to the north, and it would be a key link in any future corridor that would seek to connect the Kissimmee/Everglades system with the Green Swamp/Hilochee system to the northwest.



Management Issues

There are significant cultural resource sites present. The floodplain swamp surrounding Lake Marion Creek is only accessible by boat

Public Use and Recreation Value

Most of this assessment unit has been established as a Wildlife Management Area by FWC. Hiking, hunting, boating, canoeing and kayaking are popular activities. Boats may access Lake Marion Creek from Lake Marion or Lake Hatchineha. Additionally, the District maintains four trailheads on the south side of Cypress Parkway, and one access point off of Baltic Rd.

Lake Marion Creek and Reedy Creek: Lake Marion unit, Land Character



Lake Marion Creek



The rare grass, *Pharus Lappulaceus*

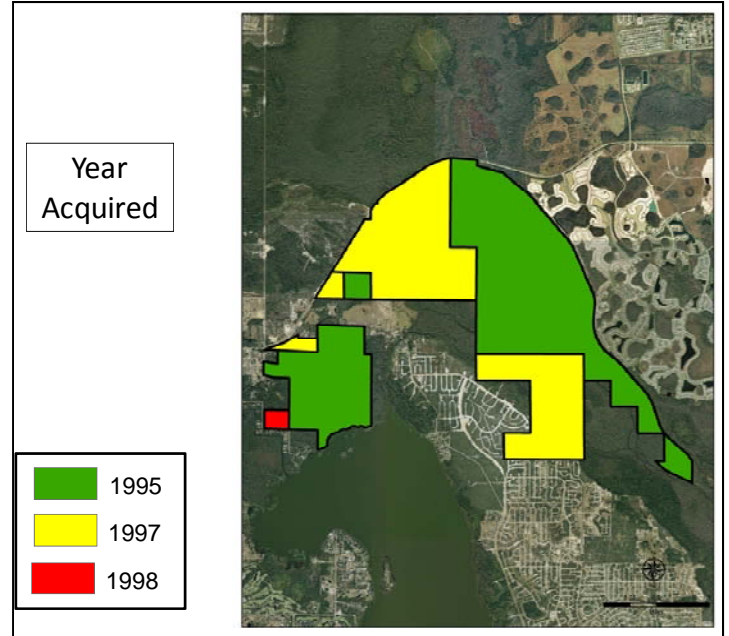
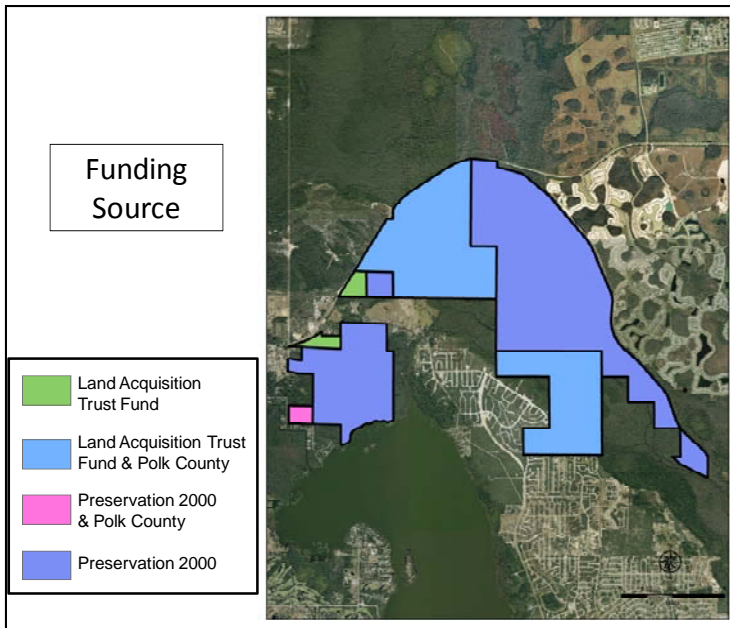


The swamp north of Lake Marion

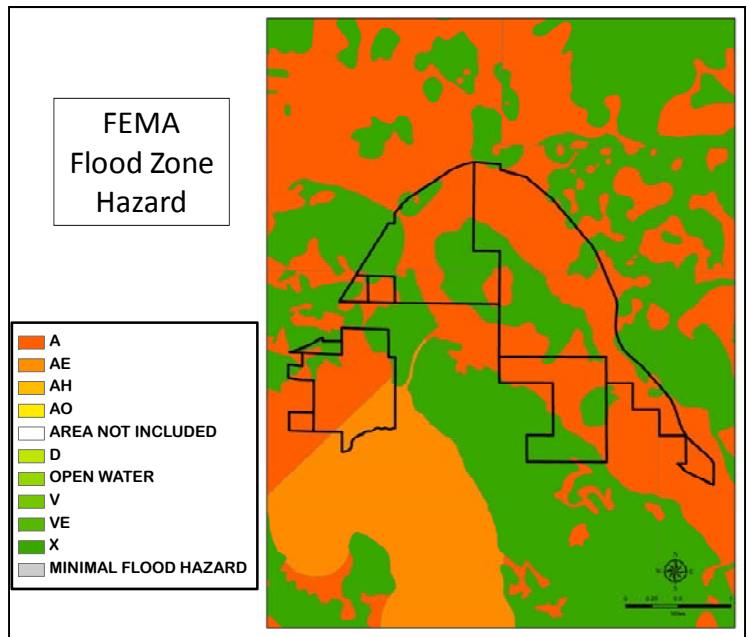
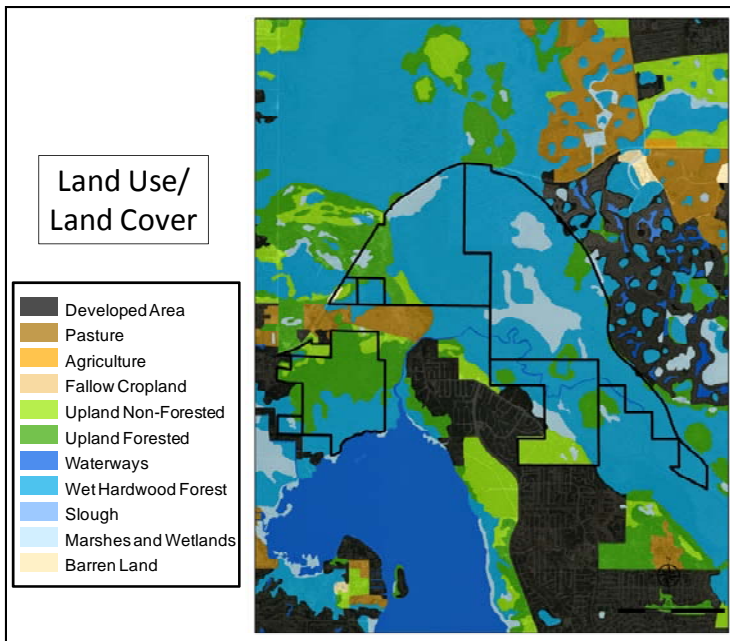


The rare and endemic cutthroat grass seepage slope with the scrub ridge in the background

Lake Marion unit, Land Acquisition



Lake Marion unit, Land Character

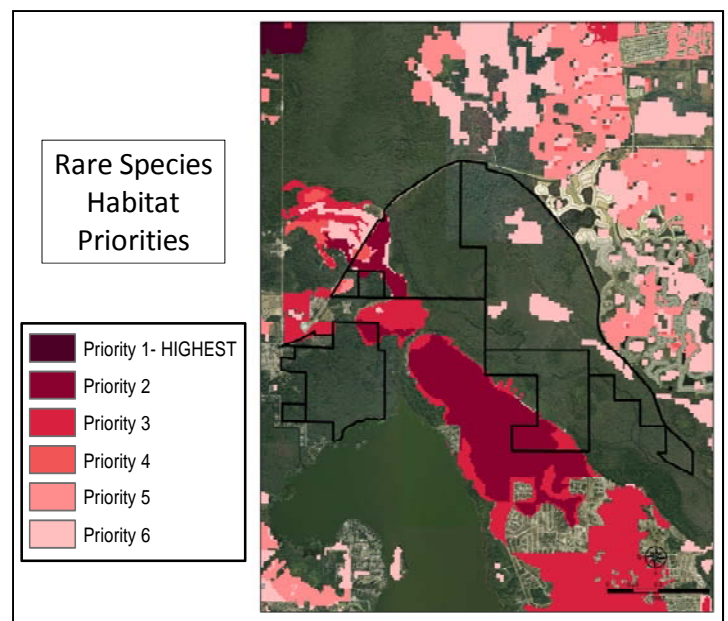
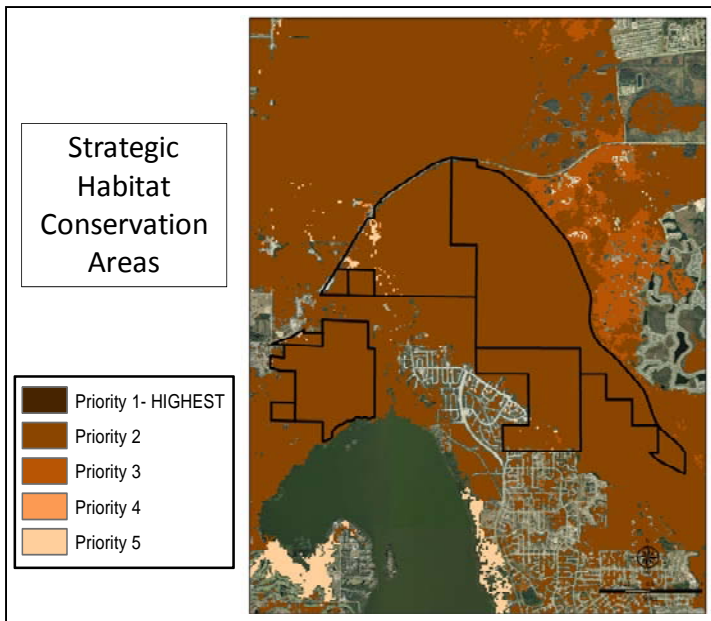
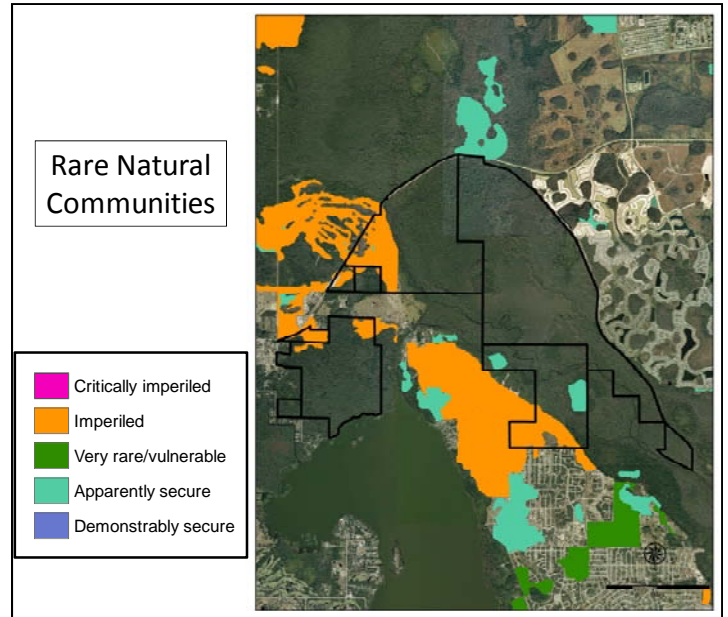
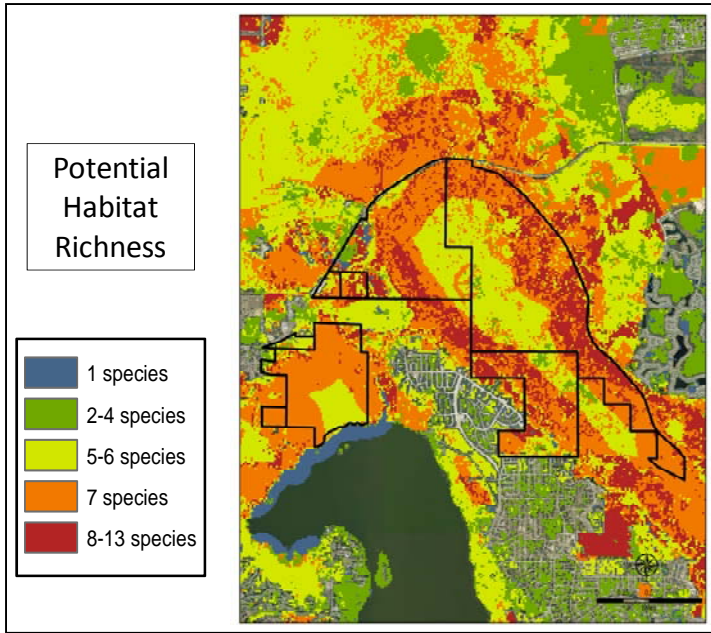


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For more information on the data layers used in the assessment, please refer to the Land Assessment Study Process and Methodology document available here:

http://www.sfwmd.gov/portal/page/portal/xrepository/sfwmd_repository_pdf/land_assessment_study_process.pdf

Lake Marion unit, Land Character (Continued)



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Lake Marion Creek and Reedy Creek

Assessment Unit: Avatar Scrub

District fee-simple ownership – 342 acres

Current Use

The site is being managed and maintained in its natural state and condition. The property had been partially cleared for development at the time of acquisition, with the routes of roads and cul-de-sacs cut into the scrub. These open sand features seem to be favored by resident scrub jays. The site was acquired by the Florida Department of Transportation and donated to the district as mitigation for water resource impacts associated with the development of a transportation corridor.

Core Mission Value

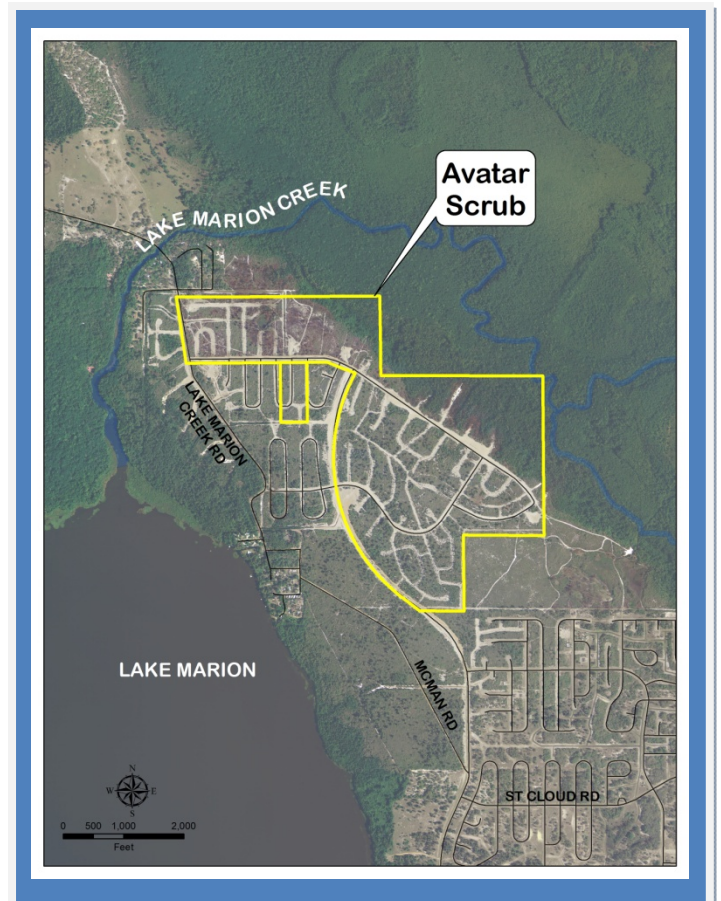
The site was acquired as mitigation for water resource impacts. The primary hydrologic feature is the forested seepage slope that runs from the high scrub down to the Lake Marion Creek floodplain. Flowing water is often observed running down the face of the seepage slope; had the site been developed, this seepage into Lake Marion Creek could have been impaired by residential runoff.

Other Resource Value / Management Issues

The scrub ridge contains many rare and endemic native plants. Listed animals include, but may not be limited to, the sand skink, gopher tortoises, Gopher Frogs, and scrub jays.

Public Use and Recreation Value

Currently the area is not part of the FWC Wildlife Management Area. The sand is likely too soft for most bicycles, but hiking access is available from an access point along Baltic Drive.



The Avatar scrub. The entire assessment unit is owned by the District.

Lake Marion Creek and Reedy Creek: Avatar Scrub, photos



The Avatar scrub, open sandy areas

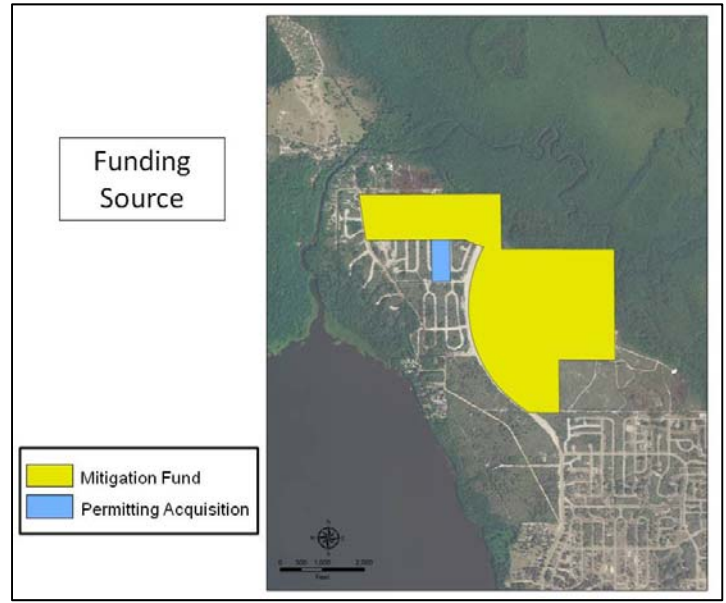
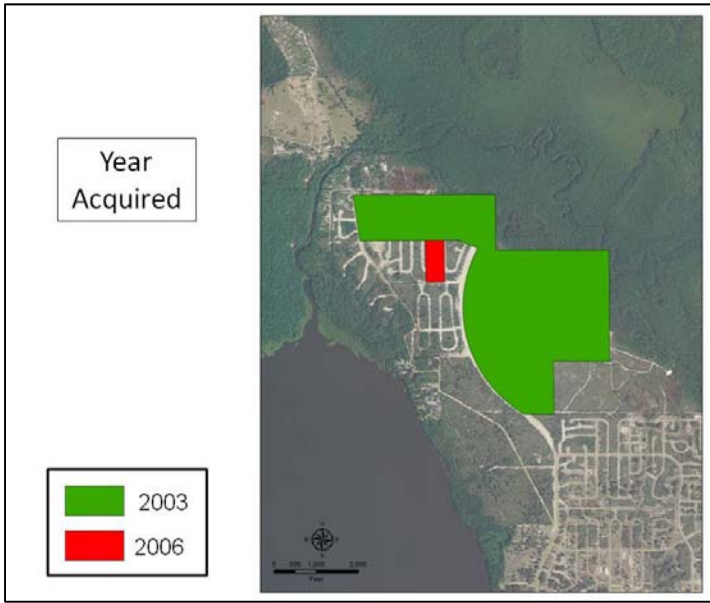


A scrub jay at the Avatar scrub

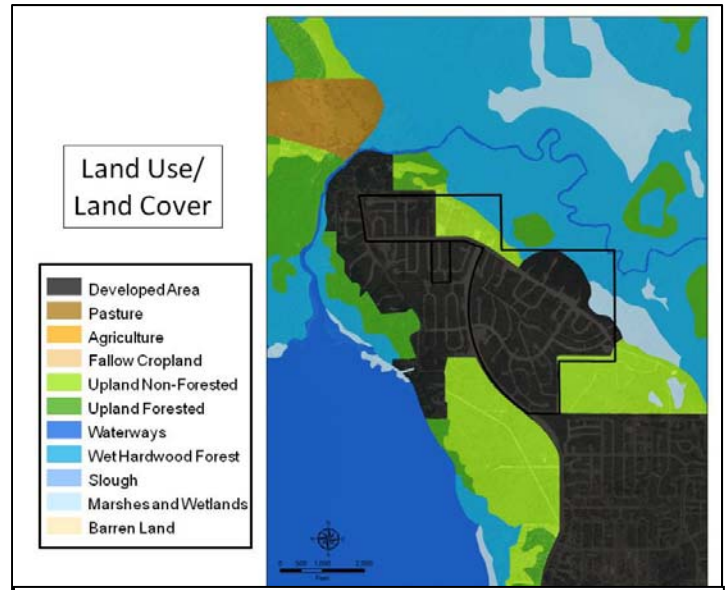
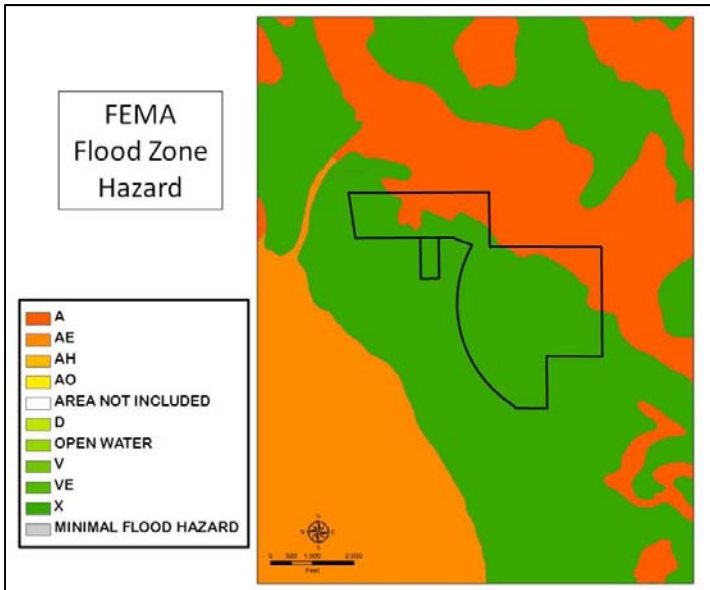


Prior to acquisition, roads and cul-de-sacs were cut into the scrub for future development

Lake Marion Creek and Reedy Creek: Avatar Scrub Acquisition



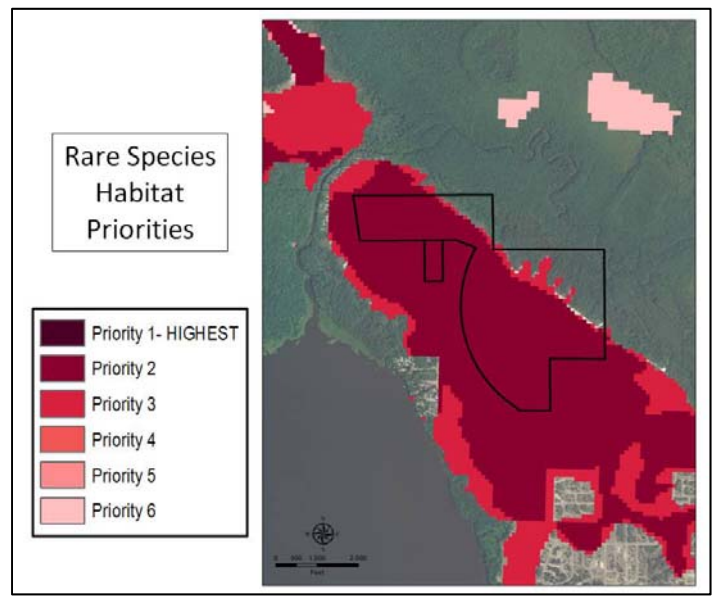
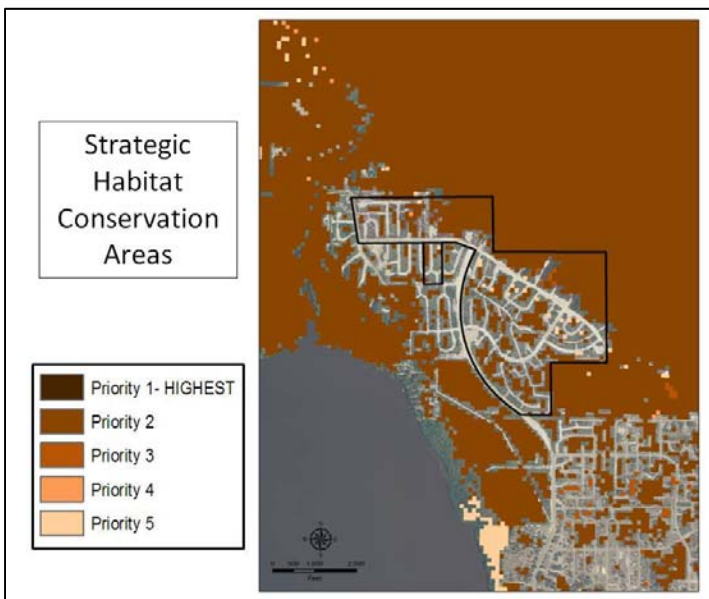
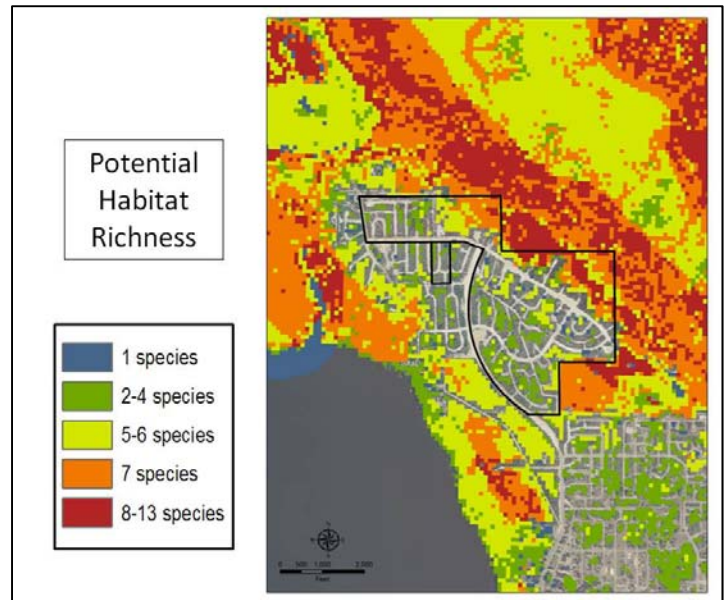
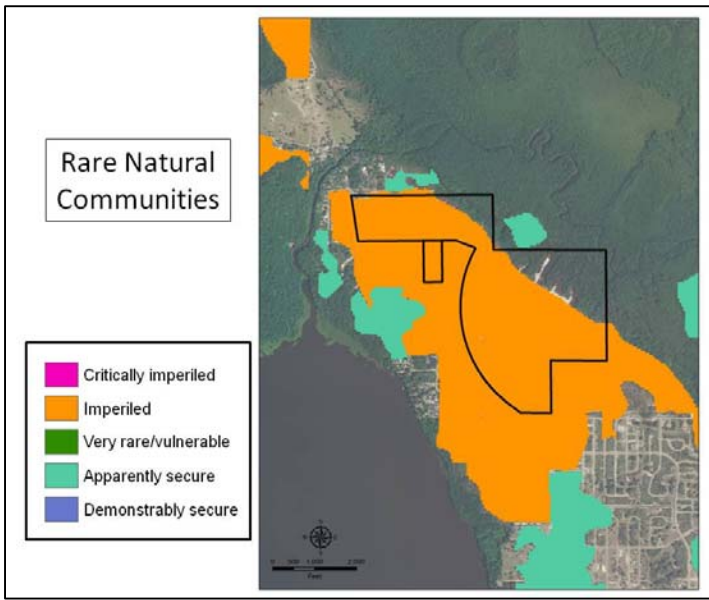
Lake Marion Creek and Reedy Creek: Avatar Scrub Land Character



Note: The site is predominantly a high quality native scrub community. It was not developed as the data suggests.

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