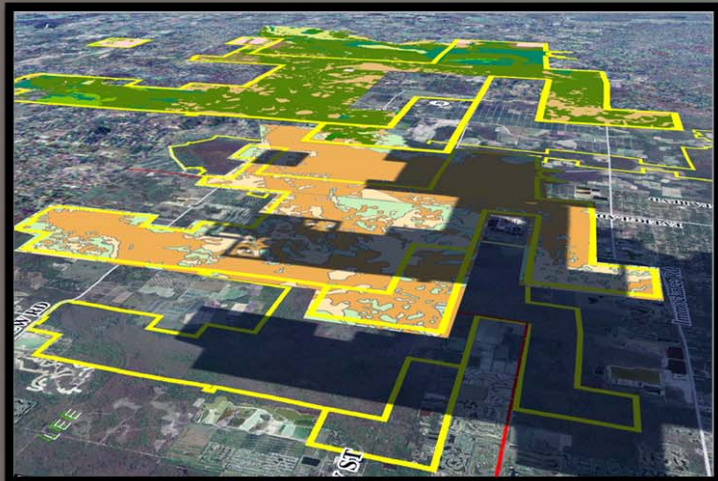


2013 SFWMD Land Assessment,
Study Process



Part I.
Fee-Simple Lands



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THE SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT'S LAND ASSETS

The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD or District) owns a wide variety of land assets that reflect its many programs, functions, and responsibilities. Today, the District has an interest in 1,419,994 acres of land for conservation or the development of water resource improvement projects. Of that, 732,424 acres have been acquired in fee-simple and 687,570 acres have been acquired in less-than-fee conservation and flowage easements

These lands all have a relationship to water resources, but otherwise serve distinct and diverse purposes. There are properties that were acquired for flood control by the District's or by the District's predecessor agencies. Similarly, there are lands that were acquired and held for anticipated maintenance needs, including areas that could be used to stage equipment or stockpile dredge material. Other land was acquired to protect flood plains from over development, thereby reducing flood damage exposure to private property; to protect water quality from storm and septic runoff; to allow flexibility in water staging to aid year-round water supply; to protect, restore and enhance a diverse network of plant communities to support natural wetland functions; and to provide world-class hunting, fishing, and other resource-based recreation opportunities to south Florida's residents and visitors. Some land was acquired through negotiations with Environmental Resource permittees as mitigation for impacted wetlands. Lastly, there have been lands acquired for water resource improvement projects, typically large-scale capital infrastructure projects such as stormwater treatment areas, dispersed water storage areas, flow equalization basins, and above ground or below ground reservoirs. Most of the water resource development projects serve multiple functions simultaneously by enhancing flood control, water supply, water quality, and public recreation.

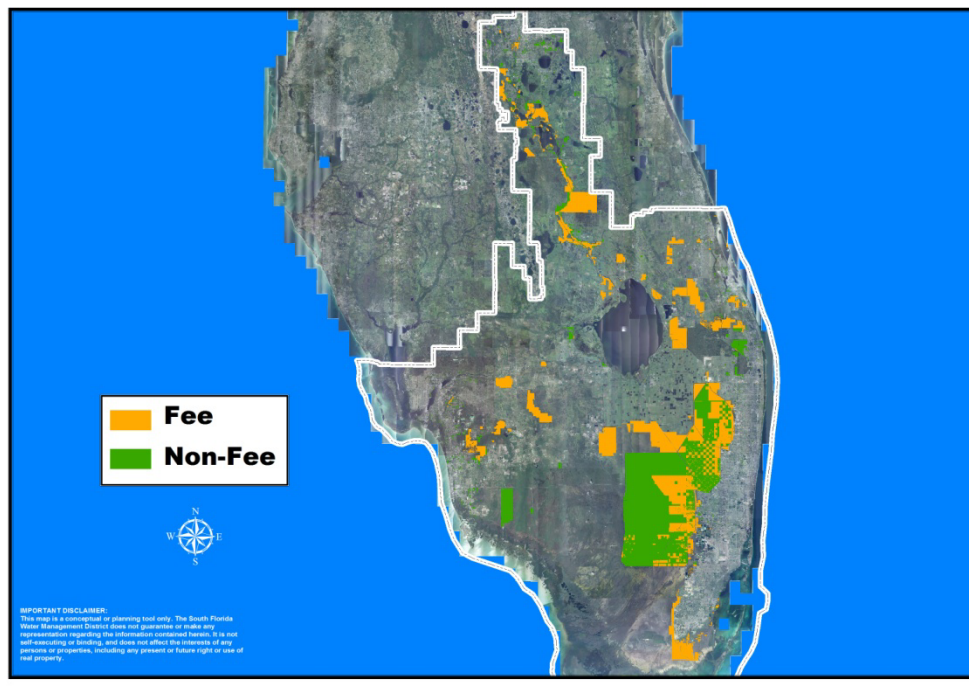


Figure 1 – SFWMD Land Ownership

PURPOSE OF THE LAND USE ASSESSMENT

The purpose of the land assessment is to take a comprehensive and detailed look at the District's land inventory to ensure that the present and future use of these lands will be utilized in the most effective manner to support the District's core mission requirements, and to comply with other important state policy objectives. The first phase of this assessment will only be looking at lands owned in fee-simple by the District, or where fee-simple title is held jointly with an acquisition partner.

LAND ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The land assessment will be conducted by assessment regions, of which there are five: the Upper Lakes, Kissimmee/Okeechobee, East Coast, West Coast, and Everglades. The land assessment will follow the same three principal steps per region.

STEP 1. Lands Inventory , Data Collection and Investigation

- A portfolio of District lands will be prepared by region, beginning with the Upper Lakes region.
- Each regional portfolio will:
 - Contain an overview of each major project area within the region, and will provide the following information:
 - the ownership of the project, it's size, and location
 - the acquisition dates and funding sources of parcels within the project
 - the funding sources used and the original intent and purpose of the project
 - an overview of the use of the land to date
 - Public use and recreation
 - maps containing relevant ecological data (described in further detail below)
 - A list of assessment units within the project and the purpose for their demarcation. Assessment units are areas within a project that will be analyzed as a distinct unit, separate from the rest of the project. These units contain related parcels that merit a detailed analysis, Parcels may be related by the funding source used, the ecological characteristics of the unit, a difference in present or planned use, or some other policy consideration.
 - Contain an overview of each assessment unit, to include:
 - Historical or background information
 - Public use and recreation within the unit
 - Ongoing land management activities within the unit
 - Issues of concern specific to the unit
 - Maps of relevant ecological data
 - Photographs of the unit
 - Contain an overview of parcels of particular concern within the larger projects and assessment units.
 - Some project may have small individual parcels of land that have some unconformity with the rest of the project to merit individualized evaluation.

- Information presented on these individualized parcels will necessarily vary depending on the nature of the unconformity.

STEP 2. Presentation of Findings and Receipt of Comments

- Data and information gathered during Step 1 for a specific regional land portfolio will be uploaded to a dedicated District website for soliciting both internal and external comments and feedback.
- The comment period will last 30 days per region, with one region at a time being posted and available for comment
- The comment period will be for concurrent feedback from both internal and external commentators.
- The purpose of the comment period is to receive comments and feedback regarding :
 1. the value and contribution of the past and current use of the land as it relates to effective support of the District's core missions and other important state policies,
 2. receipt of suggestions for future land use that may be a continuation of an existing use, a change to more effective use (either temporary or permanent), or an acknowledgement that time and circumstance has rendered the site essentially useless for District purposes or has made the original intended use unfeasible or impractical to implement.
- A standardized comment form will be provided for user convenience
- Comments and feedback will be solicited for all projects, units, and parcels presented in the portfolio.
- Comments and feedback will be solicited from the general public, recreational users of the land, and internal and external subject matter experts.
- At the close of the public comment period, the suggestions and concerns received will be compiled and summarized to aid in formulating a recommendation[s] for future use.

STEP 3. Presentation of Recommendations and Proposals

- Alternative potential land uses will be developed for each area presented in the regional portfolio, informed by the totality of the circumstances and characteristics of the site, as well as the comments and suggestions received during the comment period.
- Alternative potential land uses may include:
 - A temporary or permanent continuation of the status quo,
 - A temporary change in land use until such time that the site is able to contribute fully to the District's core mission,
 - A permanent change in land use recognizing a better potential use than that which was originally conceived,
 - The transfer of title to a partner agency that is better suited to manage and utilize the parcel,
 - An exchange of land for lands better suited to the District's core missions,

- The surplus and disposal of sites that are not likely to positively contribute to the District's core missions.
- The alternative potential land uses, a summary of the comments received, and a recommended course of action will be presented to the Water Resources Advisory Committee (WRAC), the District's Project and Lands Committee and the SFWMD Governing Board.

ACQUISITION PROGRAMS AND ACQUISITION PURPOSES

The following section outlines the various programs or funding sources through which lands have been acquired or dedicated

EVERGLADES DRAINAGE DISTRICT AND CENTRAL AND SOUTH FLORIDA FLOOD CONTROL DISTRICT LANDS

The South Florida Water Management District inherited a large quantity of land that had been acquired by predecessor agencies. The Everglades Drainage District and the Central and South Florida Flood Control District had acquired the necessary property interests to construct and maintain the network of canals, levees, and water control structures of the Central and Southern Florida Project. The State of Florida and Everglades Drainage District had completed nearly 665 miles of canals by 1927, and the Army Corps of Engineers dug 128 miles of additional canals, and 300 miles of levees as part of the Central and South Florida Project.

In 1973, when the South Florida Water Management District was formed, the District took title to the land interests that were held by the Central and South Florida Flood Control District. This land included several thousand acres in the Kissimmee River Floodplain, the islands within Lake Okeechobee, most of the present-day Water Conservation Areas in western Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties, potential dredge spoil stockpiling sites along the Caloosahatchee (C-43) and St. Lucie (C-44) rivers, and the right-of-way that was necessary to construct and operate the Central and South Florida Project.

Figure 2 – Everglades Drainage District pre-1948

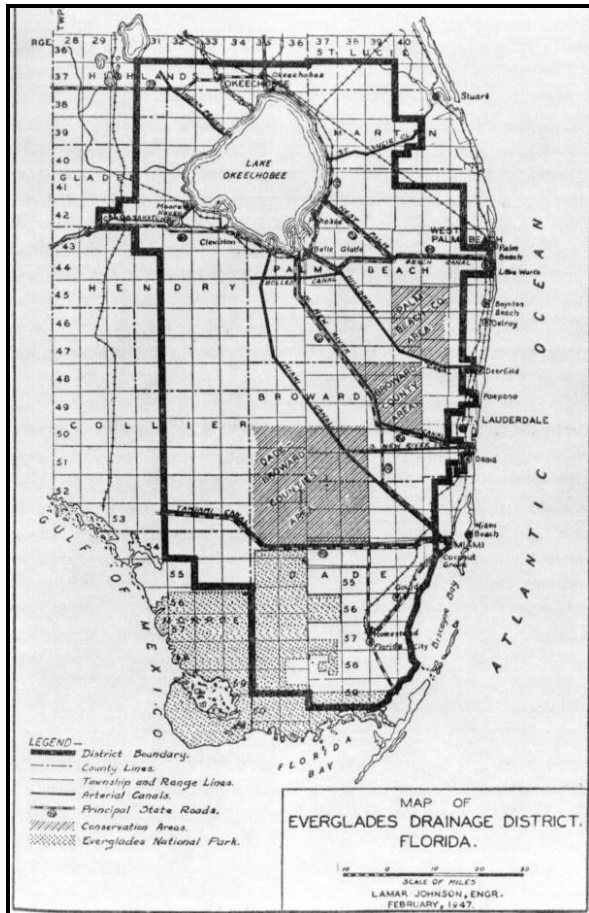
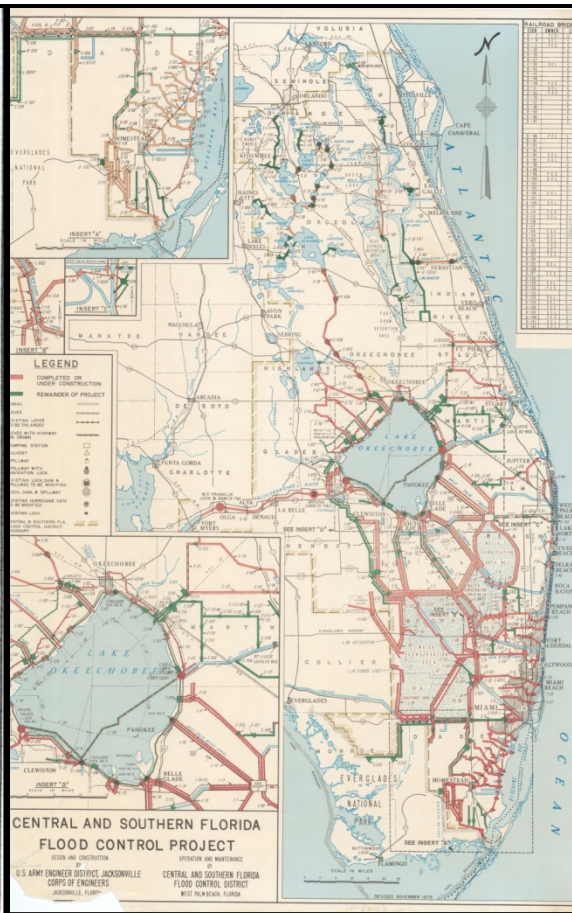


Figure 3 – Central and South Florida Flood Control Dist. 1949-72



SAVE OUR RIVERS (SOR)

The Save Our Rivers (SOR) Program began in 1981 with the legislative enactment of the Water Management Lands Trust Fund. Save Our Rivers was the unofficial name used to promote the passage of what would become, officially, the Florida River Resources Act [Chapter 373.59, Florida Statutes (F.S.)], which enabled the state’s five water management districts to buy lands needed for water management, water supply, the conservation and protection of water resources, and to make them available for appropriate public use.

The funding for SOR land acquisition originally came from direct legislative appropriations for particular projects. In 1985 the documentary stamp tax became the principal funding source for the Water Management Lands Trust Fund (Save Our Rivers) through an amendment of Chapter 201.15, F.S. Tax exempt bonds were issued in several series between 1983 and 2003 that pledged a portion of future Water Management Lands Trust Fund revenues for debt service payments. Not all Water Management Lands Trust Fund acquisitions utilized bond proceeds. Tax exempt bonds are federally regulated and carry certain restrictions and obligations in their use that may exceed state requirements for the use of an acquisition funding source. The land acquisition funding by the Water Management Lands Trust Fund was subsumed by Florida Forever in Fiscal Year 2001; however, lands have continued to be acquired to complete Save Our Rivers projects using other revenue sources.

PRESERVATION 2000

Preservation 2000 (Chapter 259.101, F.S.) provided additional revenue to the Water Management Lands Trust Fund, and also provided funds for the implementation of District SWIM (Surface Water Improvement and Management) plans, and for the Everglades Construction Project (the Palm Beach and Hendry County Stormwater Treatment Areas). Additionally, the State of Florida, through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Acquisition and Restoration Counsel, acquired lands of statewide importance following a priority list of projects. Some of those projects coincided with District acquisition projects. Consequently there are several project areas where both State Preservation 2000, and District Preservation 2000 funds were utilized to acquire land. Typically the titles to these lands are split between the District and the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (the State entity in which title to State lands are vested), in proportion to the funding source used. As with the Water Management Lands Trust Fund, Preservation consisted of both bonded and non-bonded revenue, although it was predominantly bonded.

FLORIDA FOREVER

The Florida Forever program, funded through the sale of tax-exempt bonds, was the successor to Preservation 2000 and subsumed the land acquisition component of the Water Management Land Trust Fund. Like Preservation 2000, the Florida Forever program allocated funding to both the District and the State. The State's funds have been distributed in accordance with the Acquisition and Restoration council's priority list, and through competitive local grants through the Florida Communities Trust. The District's funds are prioritized in the Florida Forever Work Plan which is submitted to the legislature annually as part of the South Florida Environmental Report.

SAVE OUR EVERGLADES

The Save Our Everglades Trust Fund (Chapter 373.472, F.S.) was created as a repository for multiple state, local, and federal funding sources that would be use to acquire lands and implement projects listed under the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan; the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Plan; the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan; the St. Lucie River Watershed Protection Plan defined; and the Florida Keys Area of Critical State Concern protection program. The Save Our Everglades Trust fund has likewise been the repository for money generated through the sale of Everglades Restoration Bonds (authorized by Chapter 215.619 F.S.), consequently the Save Our Everglades trust fund has utilized both bonded and non-bonded revenue.

EVERGLADES CRITICAL PROJECTS

In 1996 several restoration projects were included under Chapter 373.1501, F.S., projects and works that were to be completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with the District as local sponsor. These included the Kissimmee River Restoration Project, the Ten Mile Creek Project, the Water Preserve Areas, Southern Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed, Pal-Mar, and the C-111 Project.

OTHER WATER RESOURCE PROGRAMS AND FUNDING

the District has leveraged acquisition funding sources with federal grants as opportunities arose, including special appropriations within the Water Resources Development Acts, as well as the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service Wetland Reserve

Program. The District has also been able to utilize mitigation funds to acquire lands in duly noticed projects and to share acquisition costs with partners, including local governments, the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund, and the Florida Communities Trust.

DATA COLLECTION/ PROJECT SUMMARY

Datasets described in this section are intended to be used as part of an integrated decision support system for SFWMD’s Land Assessment Process, and are not intended to individually direct final recommendations. Final recommendations will consider additional data provided by subject matter experts, public input, and District partners.

Data compiled for the land assessment process was categorized based on the scale for which the dataset was designed. Only some datasets were used to evaluate all of SFWMD’s fee-owned properties ([Table 1](#)). These datasets were designed to evaluate conservation resources at a broad (i.e. regional) scale; these broad-scale data are generally not appropriate to use in evaluating individual parcels of land. More detailed datasets (local scale), many specifically designed for SFWMD properties, were used in evaluation of individual tracts or groups of tracts recommended for more detailed analyses before determining any possible alternative uses. The SFWMD’s goal was to ensure both the parcels regional and local role in supporting SFWMD’s core missions was considered.

Table 1 – Classification of data source by scale

Data Source	Regional	Local
CLIP Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas	X	
CLIP Potential Habitat Richness	X	
CLIP Priority Natural Communities	X	
CLIP Rare Species Habitat Priorities	X	
SFWMD Acquisition Boundaries	X	X
SFWMD Real Estate Data		X
SFWMD Land Use/ Land Cover	X	X
ArchHydro Enhanced Database		X
Rare Species List		X
Water Control Structures		X
Wells		X
FEMA Floodplain/ Flood Rate Insurance Data		X
USGS National Hydrography Dataset		X
Florida Department of State Historical Resources		X

FNAI CLIP DATA

The Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) Critical Lands and Waters Identification Project (CLIP) provided a suite of GIS data layers for a number of environmental resources as part of a statewide analysis of natural resource conservation priorities in Florida. The database is designed to provide information and decision support for identifying opportunities to protect and The latest version (CLIP

2.0) provides 10 individual core data layers. The FNAI groups those 10 core layers into 4 resource categories and 1 overall aggregated model. More detailed information can be found at: <http://www.fnai.org/clip.cfm>.

Six of the 10 core layers most applicable to SFWMD properties were recommended for use in SFWMD's land assessment process. Because not all core data layers from FNAI's CLIP database were appropriate to use for evaluating SFWMD properties, the combined resource category layers and the aggregated data model were not used.

Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas

The Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas dataset was developed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and last updated in 2009. This dataset evaluates 62 focal species, based on the 2009 FWC technical report, "[Wildlife Conservation Needs in Florida: Updated Recommendations for Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas](#)." All of the 62 species are terrestrial species; many are imperiled or declining in the State of Florida. Others are habitat specialists. Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas identify areas of potential habitat within a species' known range, and prioritizes species based on criteria developed by the Nature Conservancy, the Natural Heritage Program Network, and FNAI. These ranks are based on many factors, such as areas the species is known to occur, habitat information, and geographic data. The goal of this dataset is to determine the level of protection for a species given its status on current public lands and determine areas within the state with no conservation protection. The data is ranked on a scale from 0 to 5; higher values indicate higher conservation values.

Figure 4 - Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas

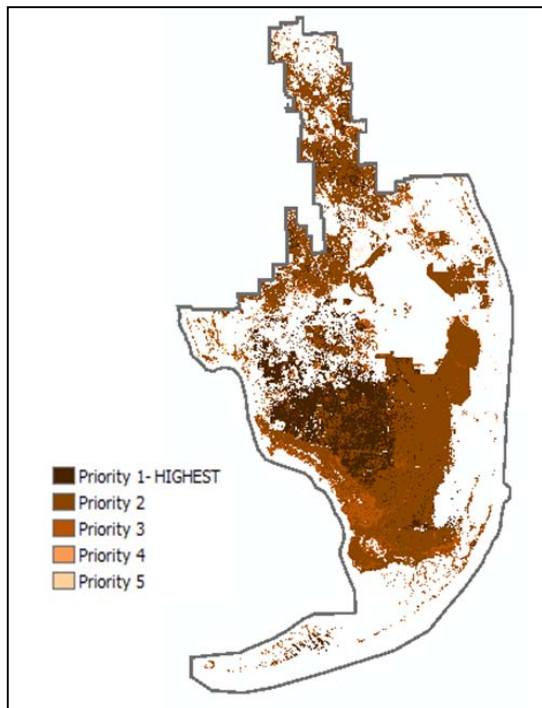
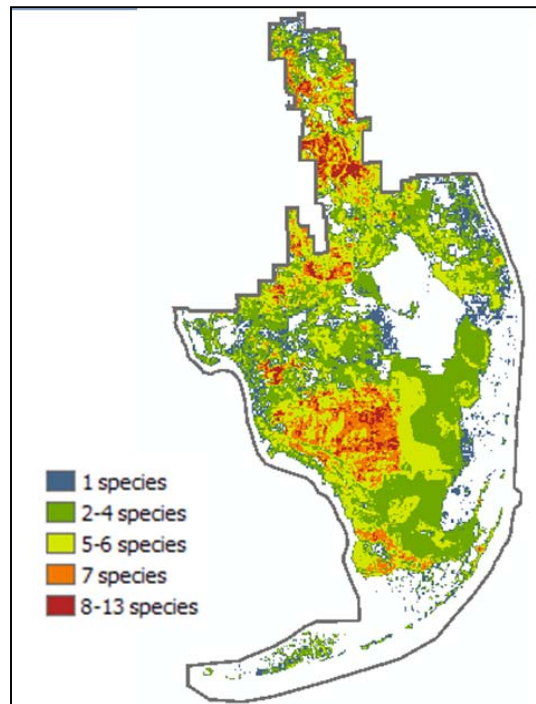


Figure 5 - Potential Habitat Richness



Potential Habitat Richness

The potential habitat richness dataset is based on a model created by FWC designed to identify areas where focal species habitat overlaps. This layer includes potential habitat models for the 62 focal species used in the Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas dataset. Unlike Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas, Potential Habitat Richness does not take species rarity into account. Rather, Potential Habitat Richness scores are based on the number of species with overlapping potential habitat. Potential Habitat Richness ranges from 1 (potential habitat for only 1 of the 62 evaluated species) to 13 (potential habitat for 13 of the 62 evaluated species).

Figure 6 - Priority Natural Communities

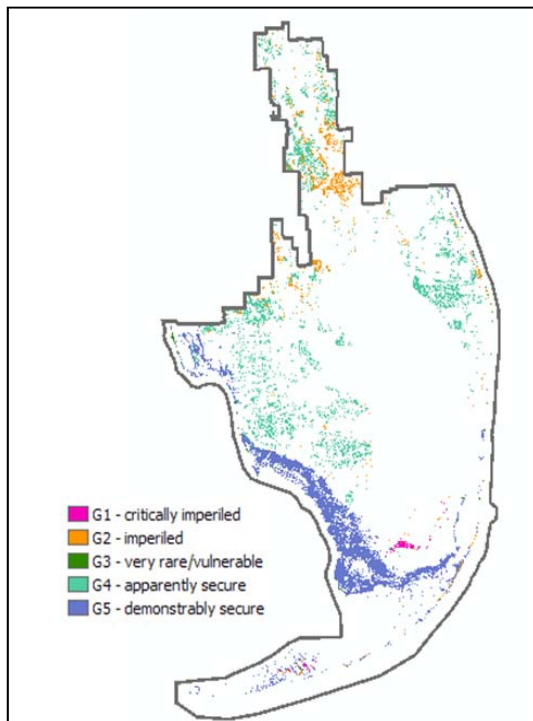
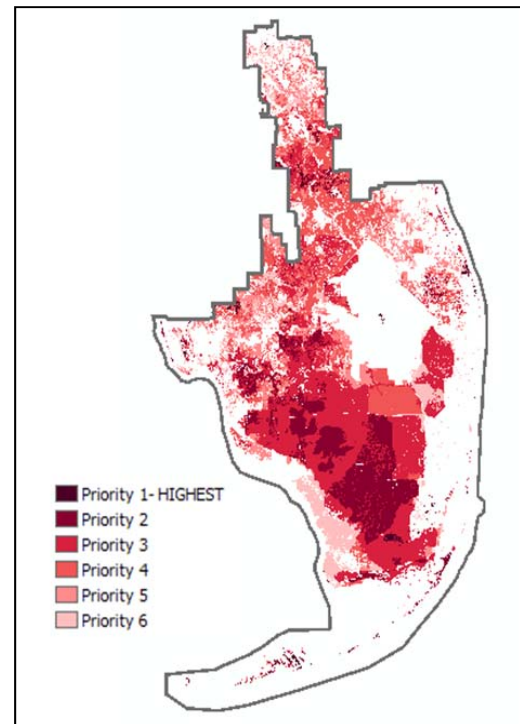


Figure 7 - Rare Species Habitat Priorities



Rare Natural Communities

The Rare Natural Communities dataset was also developed by FNAI (called Priority Natural Communities in FNAI's catalog) to assist in decision making for the Florida Forever land acquisition program. This dataset is intended to map rare and imperiled natural communities that are underrepresented on public and other conservation lands. These natural communities are a high statewide priority; local applicability of these priority designations can vary. Natural community maps are based on the Cooperative Land Cover map developed by FNAI in cooperation with FWC. The FNAI mapped locations of 11 communities (upland glades, pine rocklands, seepage slopes, scrub, sandhill, tropical hardwood hammock, upland hardwood forest, pine flatwoods, dry prairie, coastal uplands, and coastal wetlands) and prioritized each community on a scale of G1 (critically imperiled) to G5 (demonstrably secure).

Rare Species Habitat Priorities

The Rare Species Habitat Priorities dataset was originally developed by FNAI to assist in decision making for the Florida Forever land acquisition program. The dataset has since been updated with new aerial and satellite maps and input from species experts; however the focus continues to be on prioritizing species with regards to land acquisition. Emphasis was placed on species' need for additional habitat placed into conservation; the goal was to prioritize land based on both species rarity and species richness. This dataset contains habitat maps based on known occurrences for 248 species. All federally listed species were included, as well as many State listed species. Some species that are not listed at either the State or federal level were also included. Priority rankings ranged from 1 to 6, with 1 representing the highest priority habitat for rare species. Ranking was weighted based on species rarity, area of available habitat, and percentage of habitat currently protected on public or other conservation lands.

Other CLIP Layers

The FNAI CLIP provided a number of other datasets that were not utilized in the assessment of SFWMD properties. The Florida Ecological Greenways Network dataset was designed to help inform the Florida Forever land acquisition program by focusing on ecologically significant habitats that are not yet in public ownership. SFWMD places emphasis on restorable areas, not just those already in natural condition. Due to its focus on both private land and natural landscapes, this dataset was not appropriate to evaluate SFWMD properties. The Landscape Integrity Index primarily focuses on terrestrial ecosystems and does not consider large bodies of water significant. Since SFWMD's focus is on water and wetland systems, the Landscape Integrity Index was not appropriate to use for SFWMD's land assessment. The Natural Floodplain, Wetlands, and Aquifer Recharge datasets were not utilized due to their landscape-level scale and lack of specificity to SFWMD's jurisdictional area. The USGS National Hydrography Dataset (NHD) and SFWMD's ArchHydro Enhanced Database (AHED) and Land Use Land Cover datasets provide more detailed and locally-specific data, and are therefore more appropriate to use for the assessment.

SFWMD DATA

Acquisition Boundaries

The SFWMD maintains a GIS shapefile of its property boundaries. These boundaries and acreages are based on a legal description and/or survey whenever possible. Other sources of boundary information may include county databases, recorded deeds, and plat descriptions. This data includes fee-owned lands and less than fee lands, including some of SFWMD's regulatory conservation easements. Some of these data sources may become quickly outdated. Some datasets, particularly conservation easements, are known to be incomplete. However, more complete information is not currently available. Therefore, acreage information originating from these datasets are estimates only.

Real Estate Data

The SFWMD maintains its property information within the Integrated Real Estate Information System (IRIS). The IRIS system assists with management and accounting of land acquisitions and land management activities. Part of IRIS includes a database containing pertinent information about property SFWMD has an interest in, such as date acquired, purchase price, and funding sources. The SFWMD staff utilized information from this database to create 2 GIS layers – parcel funding source and parcel year acquired. These datasets provide information on when and why a property was acquired, as well as information about restrictions on the property's use.

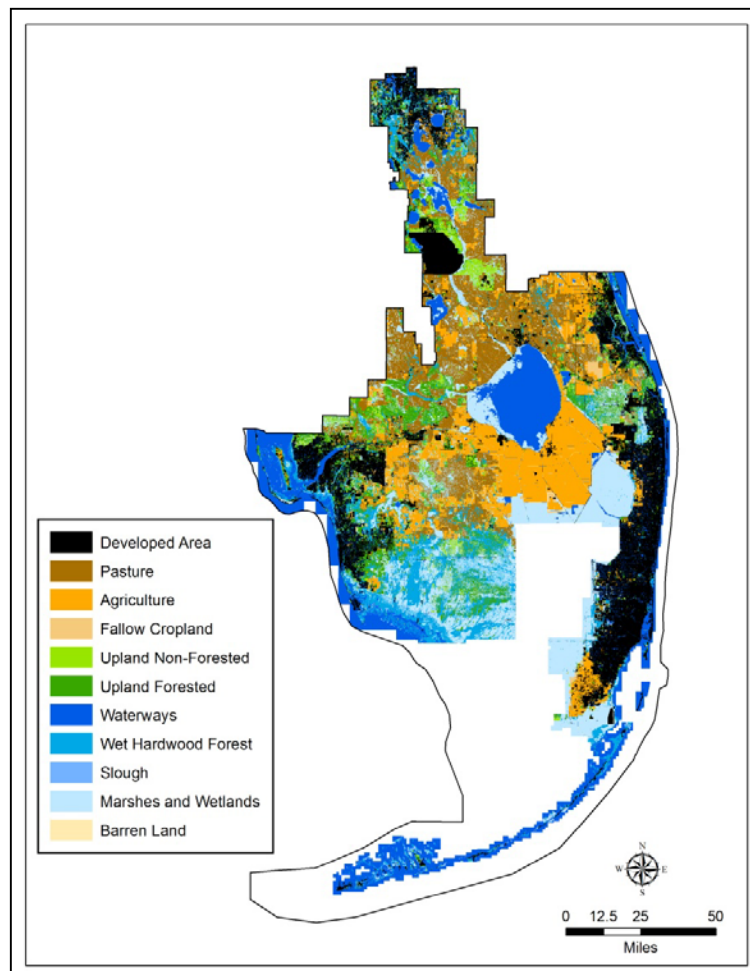
Land Use/ Land Cover

The Land Use Land Cover (LULC) dataset is a hierarchical system that groups similar types of land cover, including both natural (i.e. wetlands) and unnatural (i.e. residential) areas. This data set describes land cover and land use within the South Florida Water Management District as it existed in 2008-09. Land Use Land Cover data was updated from 2004-05 LULC using 2008-09 aerial photography and classified using the SFWMD modified Florida Land Use, Land Cover Classification System (FLUCCS) classification system

(http://my.sfwmd.gov/portal/page/portal/xrepository/sfwmd_repository_pdf/2009_pi-key.pdf).

The minimum mapping unit for classification was 2 acres for wetlands and 5 acres for uplands. SFWMD staff combined some land cover classes to increase manageability and maintain focus on the land use and land cover types most applicable to SFWMD's mission.

Figure 8 - Land Use Land Cover



ArcHydro Enhanced Database

The Arc Hydro Enhanced Database (AHED) serves as the District's system of record for the geospatial properties of hydrographic data objects. AHED is an integrated data model based on the industry's Arc Hydro Model for water resources. It has been enhanced and customized to match the specific requirements of South Florida and the District. AHED integrates the hydrographic data features into one model with relationships among features. For more information about AHED, please see:

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

Rare Species List

SFWMD maintains species occurrence lists for its conservation lands. These lists are locally updated; however they do not necessarily contain exact locations. However, this data does provide an inventory of rare and listed species documented to occur on SFWMD conservation lands.

Water Control Structures

Water control structures are built constructions where water flow is disrupted or controlled in canals by water managers. A structure can disrupt the natural flow of water, convey water, control the direction or rate of flow, maintain a desired water surface elevation, or measure water. The SFWMD maintains a database which contains all structures operated by SFWMD and also some that belong to city, county, and 298 districts. The non-SFWMD features are included in areas that are operationally important for the SFWMD.

Wells

The SFWMD maintains records about permitted well facilities are within its jurisdictional area. The facilities represent a subset of all wells associated with Water Use Permits. A Water Use Permit is required for all water uses except single family and duplex use and fire fighting. A Water Use Permit (WUP) allows withdrawal of a specified amount of water, either from the ground or from a lake or river. Many water use permits are for combined use.

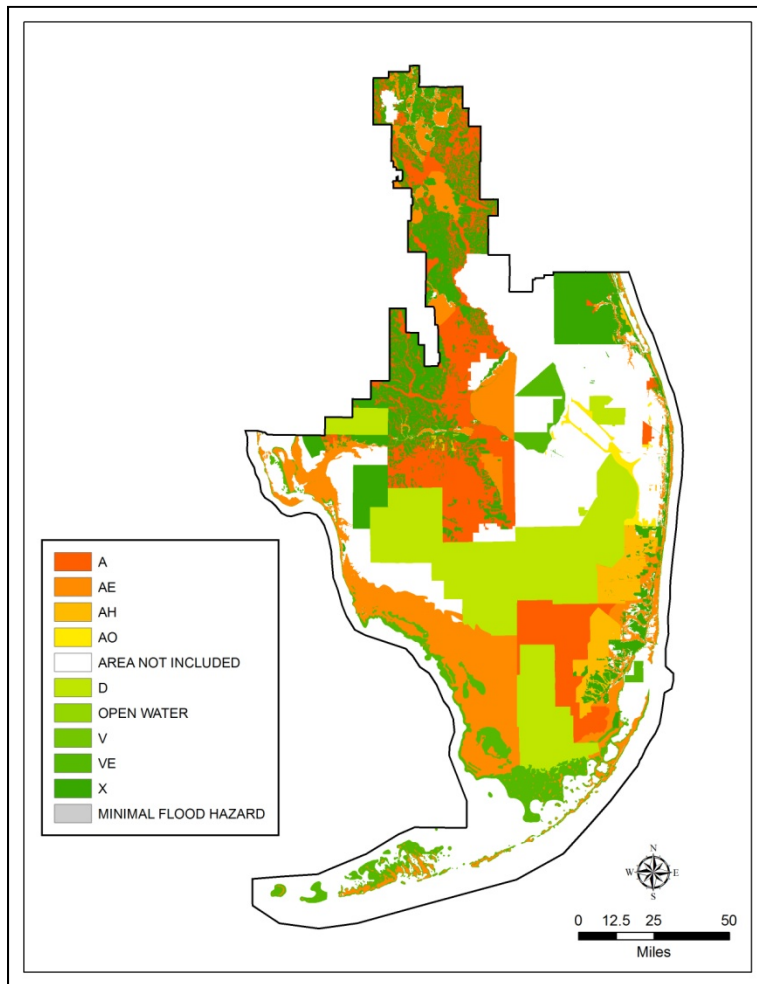
External Data

FEMA Floodplain/ Flood Rate Insurance Data

This dataset is derived from the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). While it is widely used nationally to define flood prone areas, the FIRM data is less relevant in much of South Florida where the water levels are artificially managed. FEMA maps are intended to show flooding related to natural freshwater systems, but much of the SFWMD is nearly level and regulated by canals, gates and structures. So, although flood control is a central mission of the District, the SFWMD relies on many resources other than FEMA to predict and control flooding. FEMA maps are available for all

counties in the District except for Glades and Okeechobee. Maps were georeferenced at a scale is consistent with 1:24000. The FEMA flood mapping datasets are well-documented and more information, as well as detailed descriptions of flood zone designations, can be found at: <http://www.msc.fema.gov/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/info?storeId=10001&catalogId=10001&angId=-1&content=productInfo&title=Product> and <http://www.msc.fema.gov/>.

Figure 9 - FEMA Flood Zone Areas



USGS National Hydrography Dataset

The NHD is a vector dataset based on Digital Line Graphs developed by the United States Geological Survey that contains data designed to be used in general mapping and in the analysis of surface water systems and contains a flow direction network that traces the water downstream or upstream. The NHD also uses an addressing system to link specific information about the water such as discharge rates, water quality, and fish population. The NHD data are available at 1:100,000 and 1:24,000 scale. For more information about NHD features, see the Feature Catalog at <http://nhd.usgs.gov/FeatureDirectory.swf>. This dataset is included in ArchHydro

Florida Department of State Historical Resources

The Florida Master Site File is the State of Florida's official inventory of historical cultural resources. Categories of resources recorded at the Site File include archaeological sites, historical structures, historical cemeteries, historical bridges and historic districts. The Site File also maintains copies of archaeological and historical survey reports and other manuscripts relevant to history and historic preservation in Florida. The Site File currently holds information on more than 180,000 cultural resources and copies of over 17,000 manuscripts. Site File staff do not evaluate the historical significance of sites or the potential impact of development projects, however, evaluations of historical significance by other State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) staff and preservation consultants are included in the records. Exact locations of these resources are not provided; rather a list of historical resources identified within a particular property or area will be used to assess SFWMD lands. More information can be found at <http://www.flheritage.com/index.cfm>.

Lands in Public Ownership

Connectivity and surrounding land uses will affect management and use of SFWMD properties. Information on other public ownership may be obtained from a variety of sources, including: FNAI, county governments, FDEP, and others where applicable.