

Northeast Florida Timberlands and Watershed Reserve

Partnerships and Regional Incentives

Clay, Duval and Nassau Counties

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2002
<i>Project Acres</i>	138,243
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	79,296
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	58,947
<i>2025 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$973,371,263

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Northeast Florida Timberlands and Watershed Reserve Project will increase the protection of Florida's biodiversity by protecting habitat for rare and imperiled species including the Florida black bear (*Ursus americanus floridanus*). The project will conserve spaces suitable for greenways or outdoor recreation that are compatible with conservation purposes such as camping, picnicking, nature appreciation, hiking and horseback riding. The project also has the potential to restore the quality and natural functions of land, water and wetland systems due to most of the land being disturbed, with restoration as a primary objective.

General Description

This project describes a northeast-southwest diagonal along the west side of Duval County, stretching from the Nassau River north of Jacksonville to Trail Ridge in Clay County near the town of Lawtey. Another section of the project makes a north-south connection about 12 miles long, between the Camp Blanding Military Reservation and the Etoniah Creek State Forest. About three-fourths of this land is used, or has been used, for silviculture. It also includes mesic flatwoods, cypress and hardwood swamp, sandhills and associated plant communities.





Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) Element Occurrence Summary

<u>FNAI Elements</u>	<u>Score</u>
Eastern indigo snake	G2G3/S2?
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Swallow-tailed kite	G5/S2
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
Holbrook's southern dusky salamander	G2G3/S1
Black Creek crayfish	G2/S2
<i>Ciliate-leaf tickseed*</i>	G2/S2
<i>Florida toothache grass*</i>	G2/S2
<i>Variable-leaf crownbeard*</i>	G2/S2
<i>Thorne's beaksedge*</i>	G3/S1S2
Painted bunting, eastern population	G5T3Q/S1S2
<i>Florida hartwrightia*</i>	G2G3/S2S3

**Plant species are in italics*

Public Use

The Florida Forest Service (FFS) will promote recreation and environmental education in the natural environment. There is a possibility of an intermediate and long-term need for some type of developed recreation facilities. If such facilities are developed, the use of low-impact, rustic facilities will be stressed. If an organized recreation area is desired, it will be assessed and evaluated to minimize any possible adverse effects on the natural environment. Unnecessary roads, fire lines and hydrological disturbances will be abandoned and/or restored to the greatest extent practical.

Acquisition Planning

2001

On December 6, 2001, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) recommended the Northeast Florida Timberlands and Watershed Reserve project for Group A of the 2022 Florida Forever Priority List. This fee simple and less-than-fee project was in Clay, Duval and Nassau counties and sponsored by The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the City of Jacksonville and the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD). It consisted of approximately 132,450 acres, more than 150 landowners and a taxable value of \$50,158,195.

The following 37 ownerships were identified as essential: Gilman, Jackson, Carter, Owen, Nemours, Miller, Bostiwick, Klieg, Bullock, 1st Bank and Trust, Rayonier, International Paper, Motes, Boyd, Southern Region Industrial Realty, Inc., East Fiftone Partners, Monticello Drugs, St. Joe, Barnett Bank Trustee, Anheuser-Busch, Inc., Travelers Ins., Foster, Tison, Castleton, Wright,





Buck, Logan, Higgenbotham, Betz, Ogilvie, Milne, Kaleel and Roberts, Grey, Sythe, Pharr, Wilkinson and Helmer.

2002

On January 18, 2002, the City of Jacksonville acquired Thomas Creek Fish Camp (9.26 acres).

On February 4, 2002, the City of Jacksonville acquired the Campbell parcel (18.69 acres).

On February 21, 2002, the City of Jacksonville acquired the Scarborough parcel (86.45 acres) of the Otis Road Trail Head.

On June 2, 2002, the City of Jacksonville acquired Thomas Creek Preserve (125.46 acres).

On June 14, 2002, the City of Jacksonville acquired the Block parcel (401.35 acres) of the Otis Road Trail Head.

On October 11, 2002, the City of Jacksonville acquired Monticello A (406.17 acres).

On October 24, 2002, the City of Jacksonville acquired the Peterson Farm tract of Yellow Water Branch Trail Head (96.96 acres).

On October 31, 2002, the City of Jacksonville acquired the Corwith Davis tract of Yellow Water Branch Trail Head (169.46 acres).

2003

On June 6, 2003, ARC approved a 506-acre addition, known as the Norfolk Southern property, to the project boundary in Duval County. The fee simple acquisition, sponsored by TNC, consisted of a single owner, Southern Region Industrial Realty Inc., and a taxable value of \$408,700.

On July 9, 2003, the Monticello Wildlands conservation easement (1,054 acres) is established.

On July 29, 2003, the City of Jacksonville acquired the International Paper (Ware) tract (825 acres).

On August 4, 2003, the City of Jacksonville acquired Livestock Farms (114.8 acres) and the Ellis parcel (108.5 acres) in the Camp Milton Historic Preserve.

On December 3, 2003, the City of Jacksonville acquired Loblolly Mitigation Preserve (6,222 acres) and Loblolly Park (500 acres). SJRWMD established a conservation easement on the Loblolly Mitigation Preserve.

On December 5, 2003, ARC approved a 7,043-acre addition, known as the Four Creeks Forest tract, to the project boundary in Nassau County. The fee simple acquisition, sponsored by





SJRWMD, consisted of one landowner, Rayonier Timberlands Operating Co. LP and a taxable value of \$1,478,838.

2004

On August 26, 2004, the City of Jacksonville acquired the Forbes parcel (77.94 acres) of the Otis Road Trail Head.

On August 27, 2004, the City of Jacksonville acquired the Walker parcel (125.87 acres) of the Otis Road Trail Head.

On December 3, 2004, ARC approved a 3,500-acre addition, known as the Bull Creek tract, to the project boundary in Clay County. The fee simple acquisition, sponsored by SJRWMD, consisted of one landowner, Ventura LLC, and a taxable value of \$760,646.

2005

On December 28, 2005, the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund purchased 3,939 acres from the City of Jacksonville, to be added to Cary State Forest.

2006

On June 30, 2006, the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund purchased 1,651 acres within the Florida Forever project boundary.

2007

On February 16, 2007, ARC approved a fee simple 2,665-acre addition to the Bull Creek portion of the project boundary. It was sponsored by SJRWMD, consisted of one landowner, 1621 Venture II LLC, nine parcels and a taxable value of \$445,189. FFS will manage these essential parcels.

On April 9, 2007, Thomas Creek Mitigation Bank (598 acres) is issued.

On September 14, 2007, SJRWMD established the Longbranch Crossing conservation easement (2,684.7 acres).

2008

On December 19, 2008, SJRWMD established the Arahatchee conservation easement (900 acres).

2009

On September 22, 2009, SJRWMD established the Halloran Conservation Area conservation easement (131.66 acres).





2010

On April 20, 2010, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission established the Longbranch Crossing Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site (293 acres), all of which is part of the Longbranch Crossing conservation easement.

On August 1, 2010, the Highlands Ranch Mitigation Bank (1,575.5 acres) was issued.

On November 5, 2010, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Division of State Lands purchased 15 acres (Rayonier Forest Resources, L.P.--\$18,108 with Florida Forever funds) for FFS to manage.

2011

On April 25, 2011, the Pacett tract (3.95 acres) was donated to be included in Four Creeks State Forest.

On December 9, 2011, ARC placed this project in the Partnerships and Regional Incentives category.

2013

On June 3, 2013, Seaton Creek Historic Preserve (857.88 acres) was acquired by the City of Jacksonville, approximately 671.7 acres of which are within the project boundary.

2014

On March 20, 2014, SJRWMD established the Phase I conservation easement (554.5 acres) on Highlands Ranch Mitigation Bank.

2016

On April 20, 2016, SJRWMD established the Phase II conservation easement (547.42 acres) on Highlands Ranch Mitigation Bank.

2018

On February 16, 2018, ARC voted to expand the boundary of the project to include approximately 300 acres in Nassau County (Studdard Tract), a partial inholding within Four Creeks State Forest.

On August 24, 2018, ARC voted to add a parcel to the Northeast Florida Timberlands and Watershed Reserve project. This 52-acre parcel in Nassau County is an inholding in Four Creeks State Forest near Highway A1A.





On September 20, 2018, the North Florida Land Trust acquired the Bear Bay Timber conservation easement (2,057 acres) and the McArthur Family Trust conservation easement (494.68 acres).

On October 29, 2018, the North Florida Land Trust acquired Trail Ridge Preserve (1,994.1 acres), of which 1,826.1 acres are in the project boundary.

2025

On May 7, 2025, DEP acquired, in fee, 1,265 acres in Duval County from Acree JV, LLC.

In August 2025, ARC removed approximately 6,975 acres from the project boundary that were deemed unsuitable for State acquisition.

On December 10, 2025, DEP acquired, in fee, 542.74 acres in Duval County from NBM Enterprises, LLC.

Coordination

In 1992, the 172-acre Jacksonville-Baldwin Rail Trail was acquired with Florida Greenways and Trails funds. This trail, which meanders through the project, is managed by the City of Jacksonville. SJRWMD is an acquisition partner in areas of the project to help protect multiple creeks and rivers. The National Guard Bureau, through a Memorandum of Agreement, is an acquisition partner in areas of the project to help buffer and prevent encroachment of Camp Blanding. TNC, the City of Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida Communities Trust and the U.S. Navy are also considered partners in this project.

Management Policy Statement

FFS proposes to manage the project under a multiple-use management regime consistent with FFS management of Cary State Forest, Jennings State Forest and the Cecil Field Conservation Corridor (all of which are adjacent to this project). The acquisition goals and objectives, as approved by ARC, would include timber management and restoration, low-impact diverse recreation uses, and management of archaeological and historic sites, habitat and other biological resources.

Manager(s)

FFS will be the primary manager. The City of Jacksonville is the manager for the 172-acre Jacksonville-Baldwin Rail Trail.





Management Prospectus

Qualifications for State Designation

The project's size and diversity make it desirable for use and management as a state forest. Management by FFS as a state forest is contingent on acquiring fee simple title to the core parcels adjacent to the existing state forests and to approximately 60 percent of the project.

Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management

Much of the parcel has been disturbed by past pine plantings and will require restoration work. Because this area of Florida is experiencing rapid urban growth, prescribed burning to restore the forest will have to be carefully planned. The level of management and the related management costs are expected to be high initially to obtain the necessary information to restore and manage portions as a state forest. It is recognized that a portion of the project will be less-than-fee simple. This technique is valuable on the fringes of urban growth because it allows the landowners to manage the property as they have been managing it, and continue producing forest products for Florida's economy, while protecting the property from conversion to urban growth.

Management implementation, Public access, Site security and Protection of infrastructure

Once the core areas of the project are acquired and assigned to FFS, initial public access will be provided for diverse, low-intensity outdoor recreation activities. Initial and intermediate management efforts will concentrate on site security, public and resource management access, prescribed burns, reforestation and restoration activity.

Revenue-generating potential

Timber sales will be conducted as needed to improve or to maintain the desirable ecosystem conditions. These sales will primarily take place in marketable pine stands and will provide a variable source of revenue, depending on a variety of factors. The existing condition of the timber stands on the property is such that the revenue-generating potential is expected to be moderate. Other compatible state forest sources of income will be considered. It is anticipated that management funding will come from the Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL) Trust Fund.

Cooperators in management activities

FFS will cooperate with and seek the assistance of other state agencies, local government agencies and other interested parties as appropriate. FFS intends to coordinate with Florida Fish





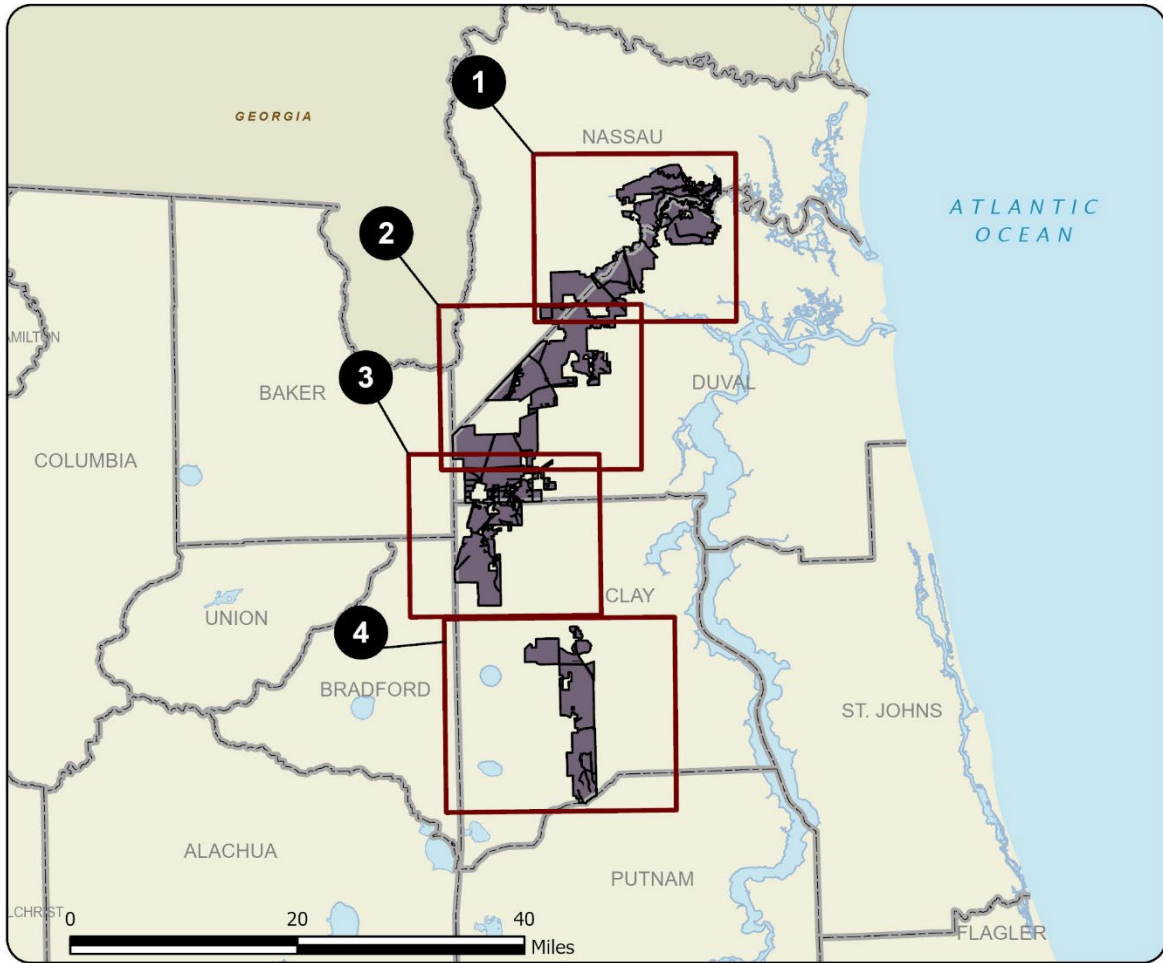
and Wildlife Conservation Commission regarding game and non-game management activity and related public use of the property.

Management Cost Summary

<u>FFS</u>	<u>Startup</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
Source of Funds	CARL	Not Provided
Salary (4 FTEs)	\$154,357	Not Provided
OPS	\$0	Not Provided
Expense	\$620,000	Not Provided
OCO	\$148,075	Not Provided
FCO	Not Provided	Not Provided
TOTAL	\$922,432	Not Provided

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted

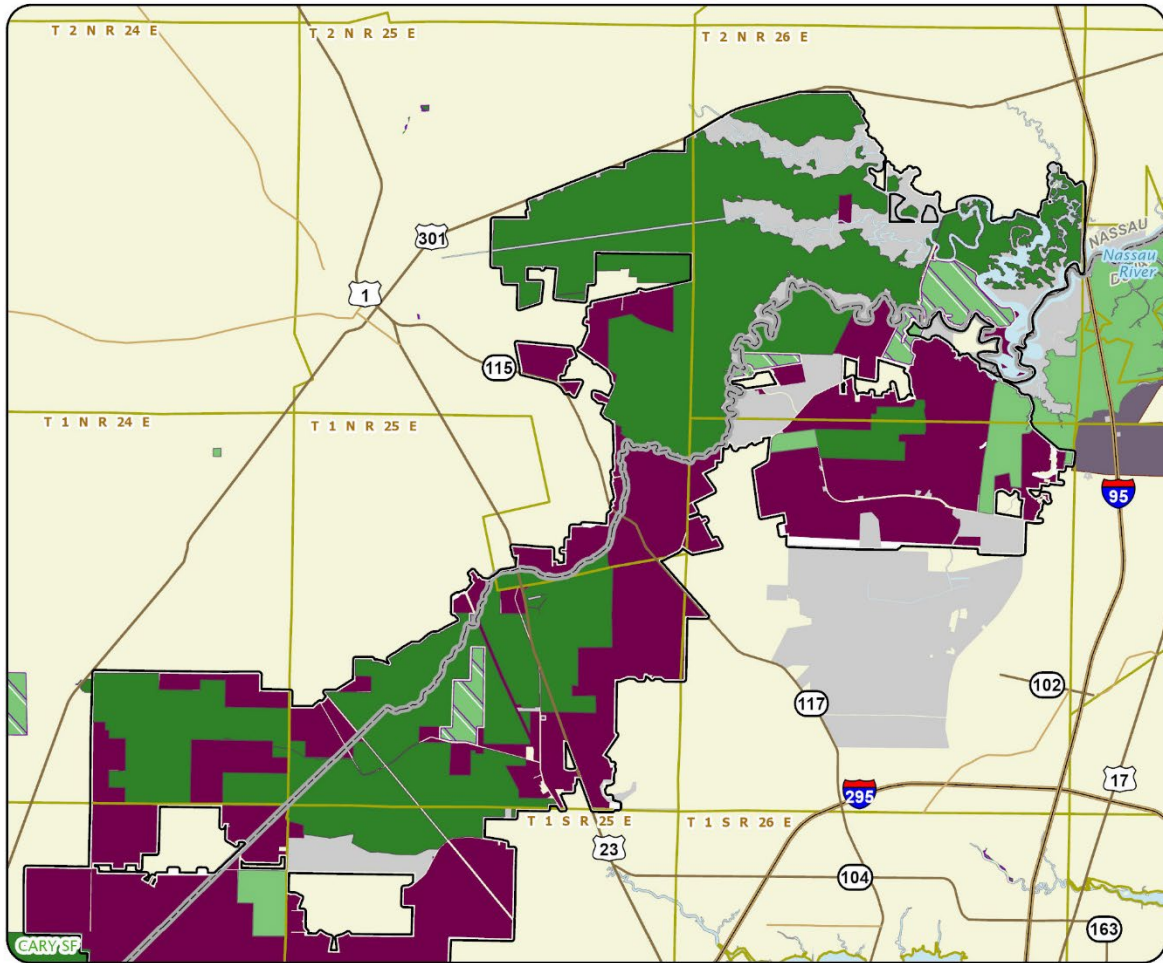




NORTHEAST FLORIDA TIMBERLANDS AND WATERSHED RESERVE: OVERVIEW

CLAY, DUVAL, AND NASSAU COUNTIES

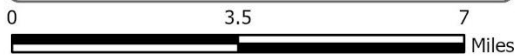


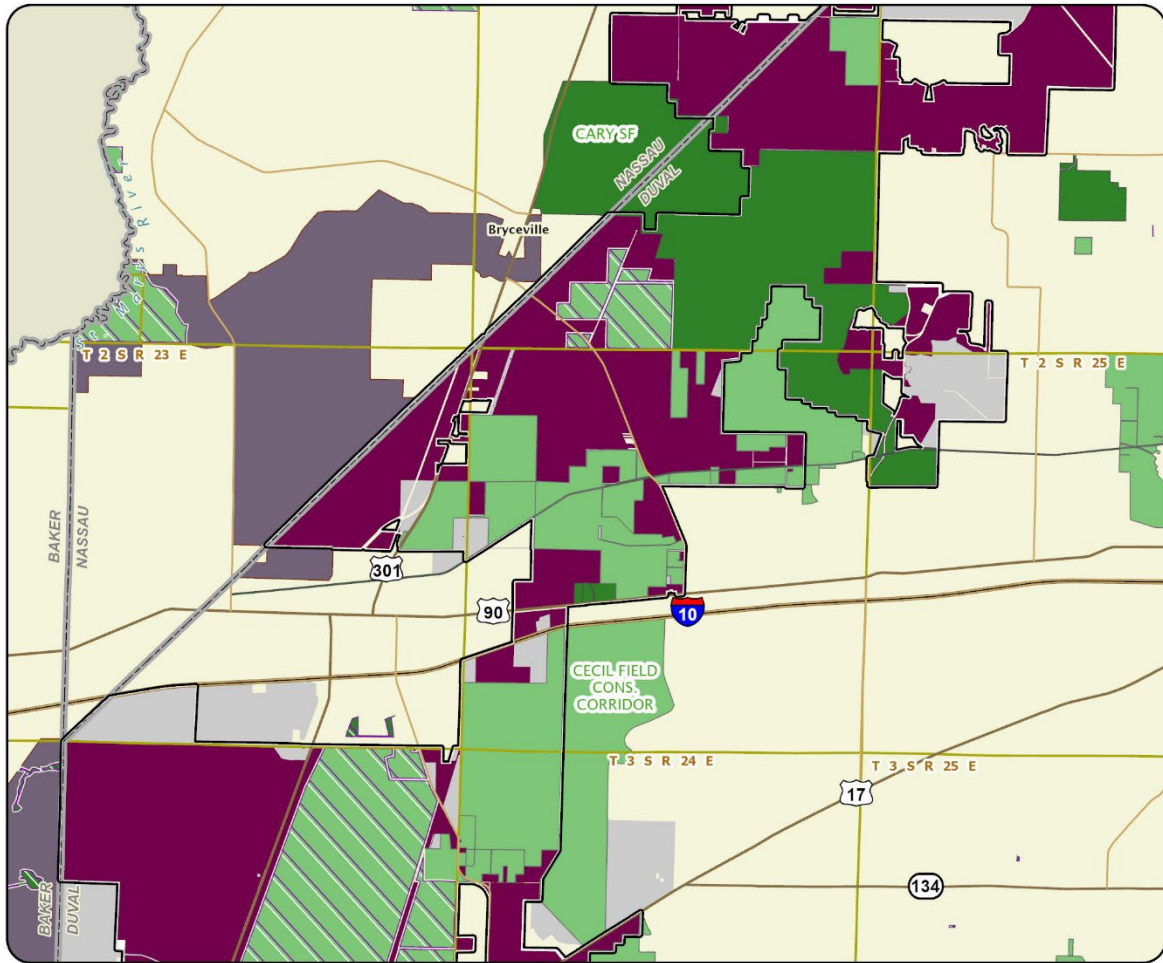


**NORTHEAST FLORIDA TIMBERLANDS AND WATERSHED RESERVE:
MAP 1**

DUVAL AND NASSAU COUNTIES








- Florida Forever Project Boundary*
 - Essential Parcels Remaining
 - Other Florida Forever Projects
 - State Conservation Lands
 - Other Conservation Lands
 - Other Public Lands
 - Less-Than-Fee Acquisition
- *Project boundary has been generalized for map clarity.*



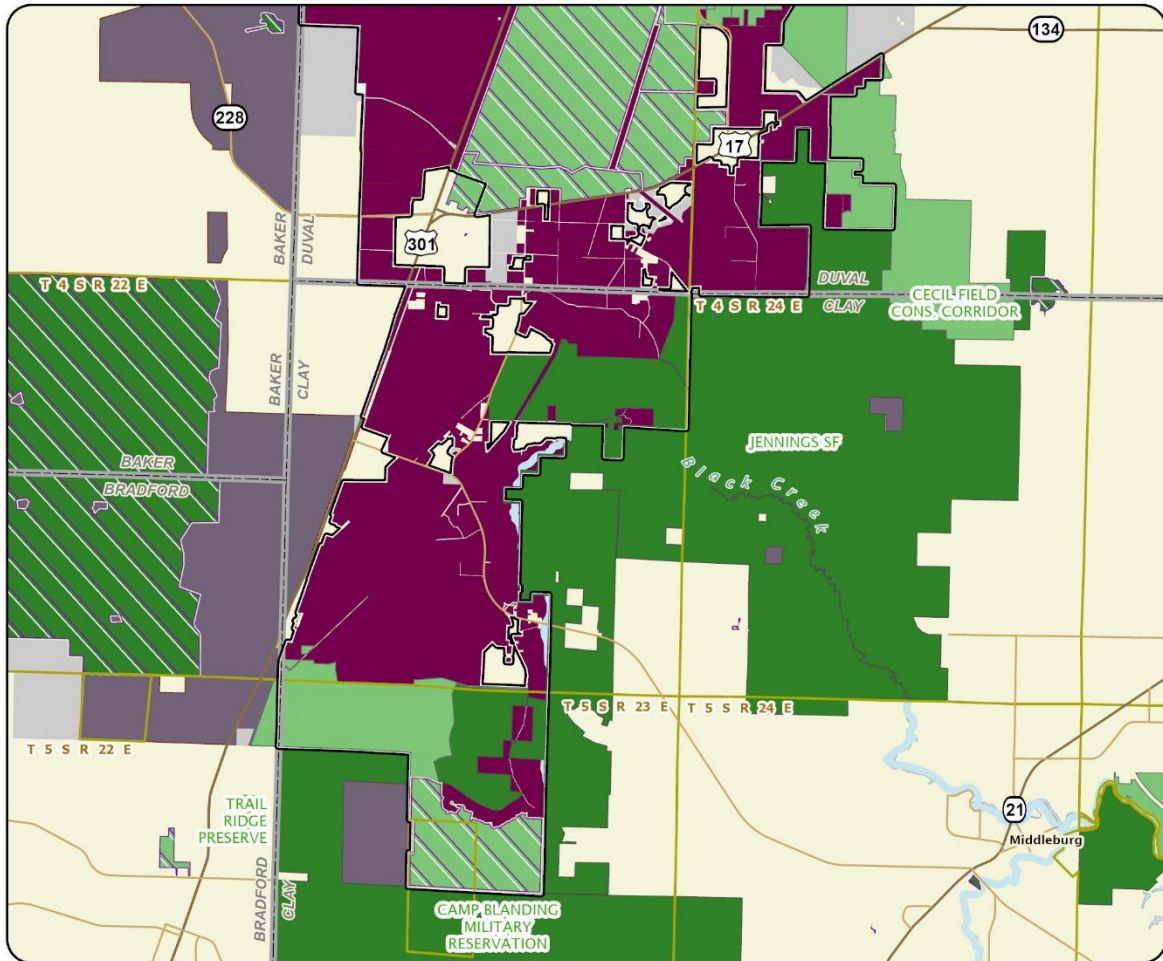


**NORTHEAST FLORIDA TIMBERLANDS AND WATERSHED RESERVE:
MAP 2**

DUVAL AND NASSAU COUNTIES

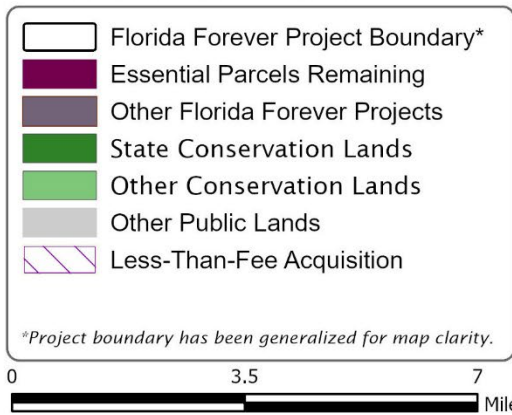
-  Florida Forever Project Boundary*
 -  Essential Parcels Remaining
 -  Other Florida Forever Projects
 -  State Conservation Lands
 -  Other Conservation Lands
 -  Other Public Lands
 -  Less-Than-Fee Acquisition
- *Project boundary has been generalized for map clarity.*

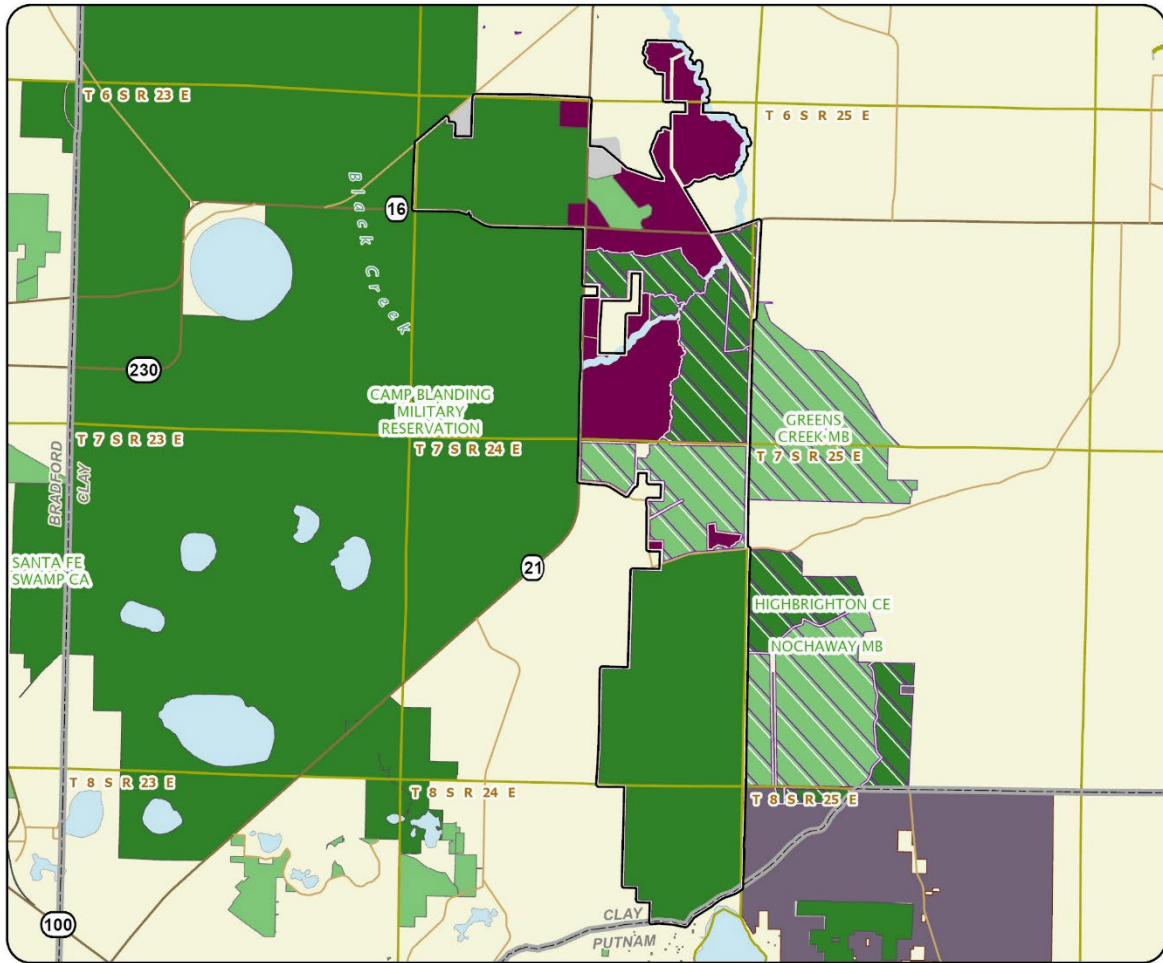




**NORTHEAST FLORIDA TIMBERLANDS AND WATERSHED RESERVE:
MAP 3**








CLAY AND DUVAL COUNTIES





**NORTHEAST FLORIDA TIMBERLANDS AND WATERSHED RESERVE:
MAP 4**

CLAY COUNTY

-  Florida Forever Project Boundary*
 -  Essential Parcels Remaining
 -  Other Florida Forever Projects
 -  State Conservation Lands
 -  Other Conservation Lands
 -  Other Public Lands
 -  Less-Than-Fee Acquisition
- *Project boundary has been generalized for map clarity.*

