

Florida Keys Ecosystem

Climate Change Lands

Monroe

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	1992
<i>Project Acres</i>	13,582
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	7,765
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$51,916,923
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	5,817
<i>2020 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$306,605,351

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Florida Keys Ecosystem project will protect all the significant unprotected hardwood hammocks left in the Keys and many rare plants and animals, including the Lower Keys marsh rabbit and Key deer. The unique hardwood hammocks of the Florida Keys and forests of West Indian plants, that provide habitat for several extremely rare animals, are being lost to the rapid development of these islands. The project will also help protect the Outstanding Florida Waters of the Keys, recreational and commercial fisheries, the reefs around the islands, and give residents and visitors more natural areas for resource-based outdoor recreation.

General Description

This project includes most of the remaining unprotected rockland hammocks (tropical hardwood hammocks) in the Keys from South Key Largo to Sugarloaf Key. This area is critically important to many rare plants and animals; it consists of 17 sites in the Upper and Middle Keys encompassing the remaining fragments of unprotected tropical hardwood hammock greater than 12.5 acres. The project includes habitat for migratory birds and virtually all remaining Lower Keys marsh rabbits, Key deer, and the state-threatened white-crowned pigeon. In all, it provides habitat for at least 34 species of rare vascular plants and 34 rare animals. Many archaeological and historical sites are recorded in the area. All the sites within the project are threatened by incompatible development.

FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

FNAI Elements	Score
<i>semaphore pricklypear</i>	G1/S1
<i>silky bluestem</i>	G1Q/S1
Key deer	G5T1/S1
Lower Keys rabbit	G5T1/S1
Loggerhead sea turtle	G3/S3
<i>Cape Sable thoroughwort</i>	G1/S1
<i>Garber's spurge</i>	G1/S1
<i>tree cactus</i>	G1/S1
<i>Cuban snake-bark</i>	G2G3T1/S1
Key ringneck snake	G5T1/S1
Florida brown snake, Lower Keys population	G5T1Q/S1
Striped mud turtle, Lower Keys population	G5T1Q/S1

Public Use

The tracts will become botanical sites, parks, and wildlife and environmental areas. Some areas will offer camping, swimming, hiking, and boating, while others will be suitable only for nature appreciation.

Acquisition Planning

1995

On December 7, 1995, the LAAC approved combining the Hammocks of the Lower Keys and Tropical Flyways projects into a single project named Florida Keys Ecosystem. The combined project consisted of approximately 4,438 acres; 465 acres were acquired for \$24,324,425 and 3,973 remained with a taxable value of \$9,619,059. Hammocks of the Lower Keys: No phasing is recommended; however, some sites are extremely vulnerable to imminent development. These sites include Cudjoe Key (Kephart tract); Big Torch Key (Outward Bound/Stelmok tract -acquired); Summerland Key (area around the pond); and Little Torch Key (Torch Key Estates Subdivision - acquired).

Estimated acreage for each site is: Cudjoe Key (38 acres); Big Torch Key (450 acres); Little Torch Key (217 acres); Summerland Key (20 acres); Sugarloaf Key (2,711 acres); Little Knockemdown Key (300 acres); Middle Torch Key (811 acres); Ramrod Key (615 acres); and Wahoo Key (26 acres – acquired), added at the LAMAC's December 3, 1993 meeting.

Tropical Flyways: No phasing is recommended; all 17 sites are being acquired with the Monroe County Land Authority as intermediary. The 17 sites are: North Creek (two large ownerships, remainder subdivided—16 acres acquired by Monroe County Land Authority), Largo Sound (one major ownership—68 acres acquired by Monroe County Land Authority), Pennekamp North (one major ownership - acquired by Monroe County Land Authority), Newport (one major ownership, remainder subdivided), Point Charles (one major ownership), Key Largo Narrows (one major ownership—acquired by Monroe County Land Authority), Dove Creek (several large ownerships, remainder subdivided—187 acres acquired by Monroe County Land Authority), Tavernier Creek (one major ownership), Lake San Pedro



(several large ownerships), Snake Creek (one major ownership - acquired by Monroe County Land Authority), Green Turtle (one major ownership), Teatable (one major ownership), Lower Matecumbe (one major ownership), North Layton (several large ownerships), Grassy Key (several large ownerships), Vaca Cut (one major ownership), and Stirrup Key (one ownership).

1998

On June 11, 1998, the LAMAC approved a fee simple, 53-acre addition (Wilson and Cotton Keys) to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the William Roberts Estate trustee and had a taxable value of \$115,106.

1999

On February 11, 1999, the LAMAC approved a fee simple, 955-acre addition (Boot Key) to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the FWC and consisted of one owner, Azurite Corp, LTD Florida, and had a taxable value of \$178,019.

On July 29, 1999, the LAMAC approved an owner requested, 6-acre deletion on Ramrod Key from the project boundary.

2003

In 2003, TNC purchased 593.75 acres, known as Tarpon Basin, in the Newport Hammocks site.

On December 05, 2003, the ARC approved a fee simple, 11.5-acre addition (Channel Key Island) to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the owner, Barbara Trueman, and had a taxable value of \$17,268.

2004

On June 4, 2004, the ARC approved a fee simple, 3,063-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the FWC, consisted of multiple owners, and had a taxable value of \$7,400,000. The 910 parcels are located on several offshore islands and six named Keys (Little Torch, Saddlebunch, Ramrod, Summerland, Cudjoe, and Upper Sugarloaf). FWC will manage 1,758 acres as an addition to the Florida Keys Wildlife Environmental Area (WEA) and the FWS will manage the remaining acres as an addition to the Florida Key Deer Refuge.

2005

On February 11, 2005, the ARC approved a fee simple, 3,695-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the multiple entities, consisted of multiple owners, and had a taxable value of approximately \$31,847,907.

2007

On October 13, 2007, the ARC approved a fee simple, 8.6-acre addition to the Sugarloaf Key portion of the project boundary. It was sponsored by FWC, consisted of two parcels under single ownership (Community Sons of the Divine Will), and had a taxable value of \$6,286,220. The proposed manager, FWC, does not consider the parcels essential. This boundary addition was approved with the understanding that FWC would share in the cost of the acquisition.



2008

In June 2008, the 67-acre Camilus House exchange with University of Miami for other BOT land was completed, at no cost to Florida Forever. The following acres (ownerships) were purchased by DSL: 0.07 acre of Dove Creek (Cameron) for \$46,250; 1.3 acres (Neff) of Grassy Key for \$382,000; 0.15 acre (Marrerro) in Newport Hammocks for \$235,000; 42.22 acres (MandM Joint Venture, LLP) in Boca Chica Key for \$566,100; and 54.75 acres (Utility Board of the City of Key West) in Cudjoe Key for \$1,938,000. Monroe County will be the manager.

In July 2008, DSL acquired 0.11 acre of the Pierce ownership in Charles Hammocks for \$46,250. Monroe County will be the manager.

In September 2008, DSL acquired 3.03 acres (1.01 acres plus 2.02 acres) from the Otha Cox Estate in Cudjoe Key for a total of \$137,500 (\$47,500 plus \$90,000) Monroe County will be the manager.

In November 2008, DSL acquired 1.01 acre of the Smith ownership for \$37,000. FWC will be the manager.

2009

On February 6, 2009 the FDOT donated a total of 14.18 acres on Sugarloaf (0.86 acre within the project boundary) with a total donated value of \$9,265,212. At the June 2009 meeting, ARC accepted a request by the Retus Group LLC to remove 7 acres of their ownership in Marathon from the project. On June 24, 2010 Gary Burchfield donated 1.78 acres on Sugarloaf Key (donated value of \$60,000). FWC will be the manager.

2010

On October 15, 2010 the ARC approved requests by property owners to remove 7 acres of their ownership within the project boundary (\$23,832 just value).

On December 10, 2010 the ARC approved an 11.25-acre boundary addition in Boot Key with a tax assessed just value of \$410,544, to assist with a Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) grant application. The City of Marathon is interested in purchasing all of Boot Key as proposed in the CELCP application.

2011

On January 20, 2011 Anne Kirkly donated 7.39 acres (value of \$3,208) in Dove Creek Hammocks to be managed by FWC. On June 1, 11 James D. Hanson, Jr. donated 284.54 acres (Windley Key-value of \$200,000) to be managed by DRP.

On December 9, 2011, the ARC placed this project in the Climate Change Lands category of Florida Forever projects.

2012

On April 20, 2012 the ARC removed 8.6 acres from the project at a landowner's request. On June 15, 2012 ARC deleted a 3.2-acre property on Plantation Key from the project boundary at the request of the landowner. There may be additional small acreage changes (additions and removals) not captured



above, however in calendar year 2017, a total of 138.65 acres in this project were acquired using Florida Forever program funding.

2020

On February 14, 2020, the ARC approved a removal of 1.07-acres in Monroe County from the project boundary.

2021

On June 11, 2021, the ARC approved an addition of 1.3-acres in Monroe County to the project boundary.

DEP acquired in fee simple 0.34 acres from Stephen and Kathy Rupp and received a donation of 1.01 acres via exchange from Philip Frank and Rowena Garcia. Both parcels will be managed by FWC.

Coordination

TNC and the National Audubon Society sponsored this project. TNC, the Monroe County Land Authority, and the FWS are participants and have been intermediaries in the acquisition of some of the sites within this project.

Management Policy Statement

The primary goals of management of the project are to conserve and protect environmentally unique and irreplaceable lands that contain native, relatively unaltered flora and fauna representing a natural area unique to, or scarce within, a region of this state or a larger geographic area; conserve and protect lands within areas of critical state concern; conserve and protect habitat for native species or endangered and threatened species; and conserve, protect, manage, or restore important ecosystems, landscapes, and forests, in order to enhance or protect significant surface water, coastal, recreational, timber, fish or wildlife resources that local or state programs cannot adequately protect.

Manager(s)

FWC is recommended to managed 19 sites: (Cudjoe Key; Tavernier Creek; Little Torch Key; Lake San Pedro; Middle Torch; Key Snake Creek; Big Torch Key; Green Turtle; Summerland Key; Vaca Cut; Sugarloaf Key; Stirrup Key; Little Knockemdown Key; Saddlebunch Key; Ramrod Key; Wahoo Key; Dove Creek; and Upper Sugarloaf Key).

DRP is recommended to manage 10 sites (Key Largo Narrows; Grassy Key Site; Point Charles Hammock; Teatable Hammock; Largo Sound Hammock; Pennekamp North; North Creek Hammock; Newport Hammock; Lower Matecumbe Hammock; and North Layton Hammock). The FWS, Monroe County, City of Marathon, and City of Islamorada also manage some properties.

Management Prospectus**Qualifications for state designation**

The unique wildlife, plant, and recreational resources of the Florida Keys Ecosystem sites qualify them as wildlife and environmental areas, botanical sites or preserves, and state parks.



Conditions affecting intensity of management

The Florida Keys Ecosystem project generally includes high-need tracts because of their small size and proximity to intensive residential and commercial development. They require basic natural areas land management including exotic-species removal, avoidance of actions that further fragment the hammocks, general trash and debris removal, posting and some fencing, and the establishment of some basic visitor amenities at selected sites. Special species may require specific management actions. The project areas are a high-need management area which, because of their location, size and nature, will require a high level of attention to maintain and perpetuate their individual resources.

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

Within the first year after acquisition, FWC will give management priority to natural resource inventory and planning. Sites will be surveyed for rare and endangered species and management plans will be prepared. In future years, management will concentrate on implementing the plans with emphasis on exotic species eradication and maintenance, trash and debris removal, and posting and fencing for security. Long-range management will focus on using the sites to build public awareness and support for natural areas protection in general, and for tropical hardwood hammock preservation. Most tracts will provide passive recreational activities for the general public. Longer range goals would include development of a detailed management plan focused on perpetuation and maintenance of natural communities. An in-depth resource inventory would be carried out to identify and map all sensitive areas that warrant special consideration. Visitor amenities will be planned and constructed at appropriate sites within the project and public environmental-education programs will be developed. First year management activities will include site security, natural and cultural resource protection, and efforts toward the development of a plan for long-term public use and resource management.

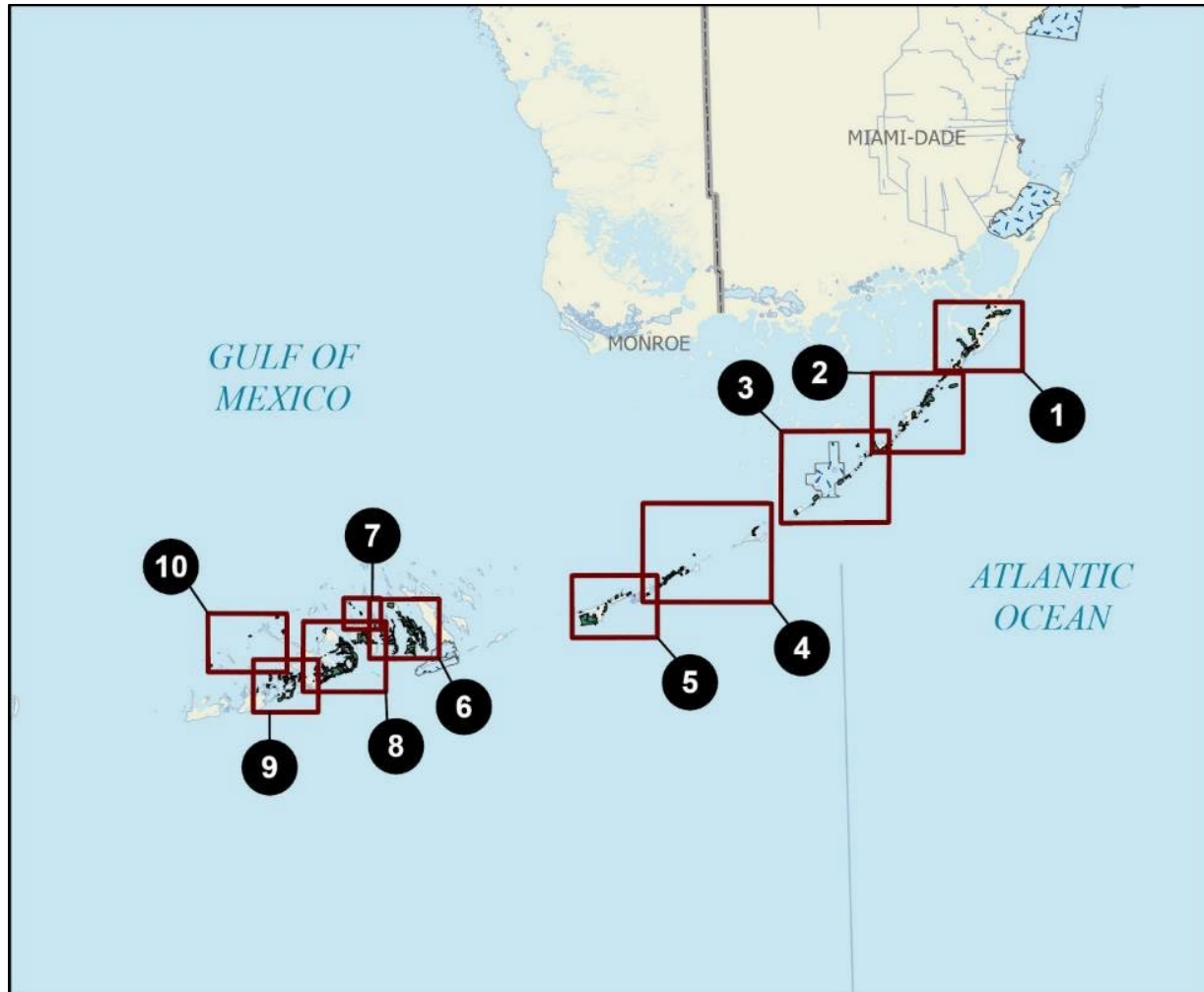
Revenue-generating potential

Public use of sites managed by FWC will be relatively low because no infrastructure will be provided. For the sites managed by DRP, no significant revenue is expected to be generated initially. After acquisition, it will probably be several years before any significant level of public use facilities is developed. The amount of any future revenue generated would depend on the nature and extent of public use and facilities.

Cooperators in management activities

FWC will cooperate with and seek the assistance of the FWS, other state agencies, local government entities and interested parties as appropriate.

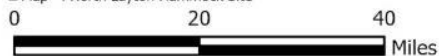




FLORIDA KEYS ECOSYSTEM: OVERVIEW

MONROE COUNTY

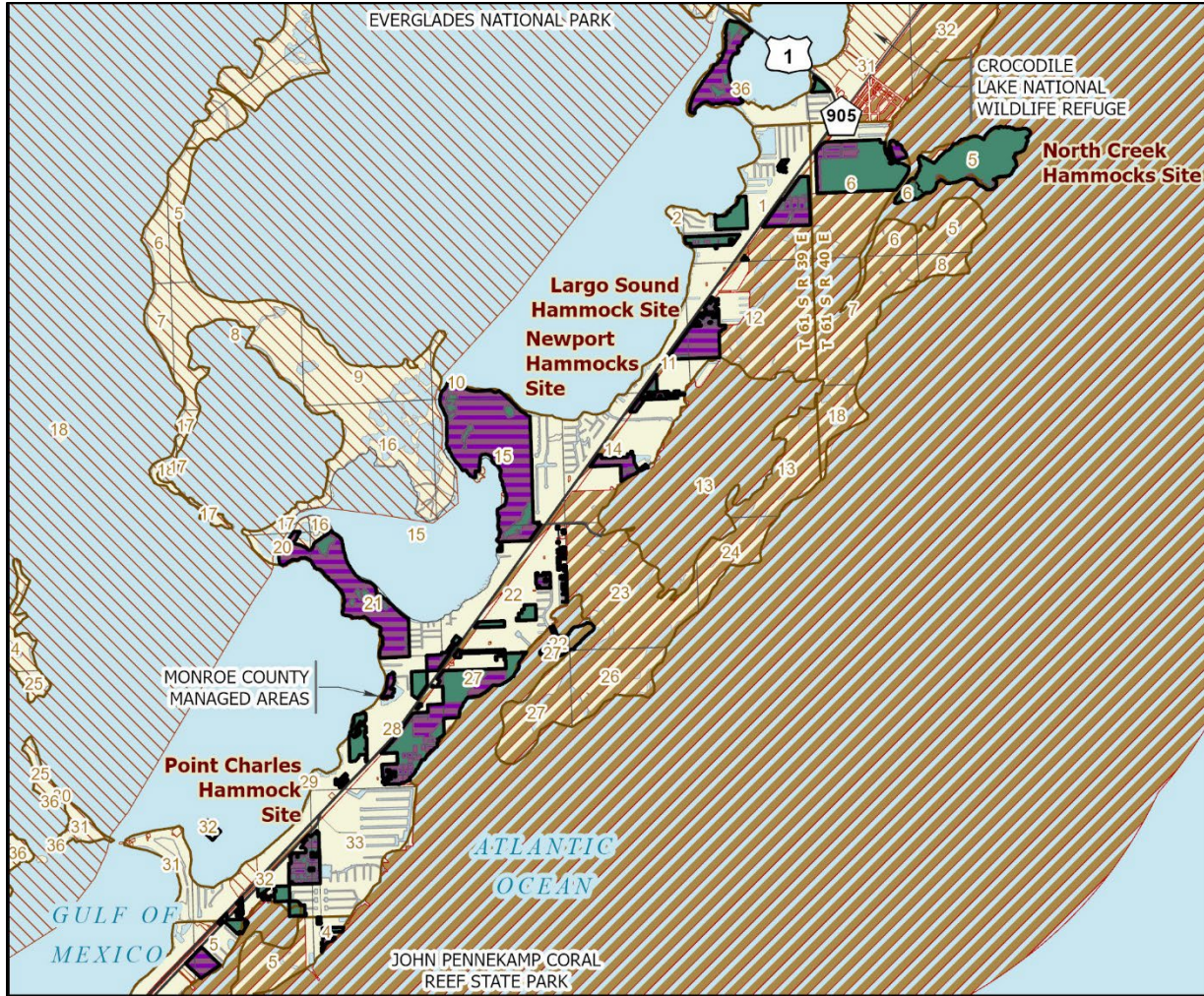
- Map 1 Largo Sound Hammock Site
- Map 1 Newport Hammocks Site
- Map 1 North Creek Hammocks Site
- Map 1 Point Charles Hammock Site
- Map 2 Dove Creek Hammocks Site
- Map 2 Islamorada/Plantation Key Site
- Map 2 Key Largo Narrows Hammock Site
- Map 2 Rodriguez Key Site
- Map 2 Tavernier Creek Hammocks Site
- Map 2 Tavernier Key Site
- Map 3 Cotton Key Site
- Map 3 Islamorada/Upper Matecumbe Keys Site
- Map 3 Lower Matecumbe Hammock Site
- Map 3 Wilson Key Site
- Map 3 Windley Key Site
- Map 4 Channel Key Site
- Map 4 Grassy Key Hammocks Site
- Map 4 Marathon/Crawl Key Site
- Map 4 North Layton Hammock Site
- Map 4 Pennekamp North Hammock Site
- Map 4 Tom's Harbor Keys Site
- Map 5 Boot Key Site
- Map 5 Marathon/Fat Deer Key Site
- Map 5 Marathon/Vaca Key Site
- Map 6 Big Torch Key Site
- Map 6 Little Knockemdown Key Site
- Map 6 Little Torch Key Site
- Map 6 Middle Torch Key Site
- Map 6 Ramrod Key Site
- Map 6 Summerland Key Site
- Map 7 Budd Key Site
- Map 7 Knockemdown Key Site
- Map 8 Cudjoe Key Site
- Map 8 Sugarloaf Key Site
- Map 9 Boca Chica Key Site
- Map 9 Saddlebunch Keys Site
- Map 10 Great White Heron Keys Site



JANUARY 2020

Map 1: FNAI, January 2020





FLORIDA KEYS ECOSYSTEM: MAP 1

MONROE COUNTY

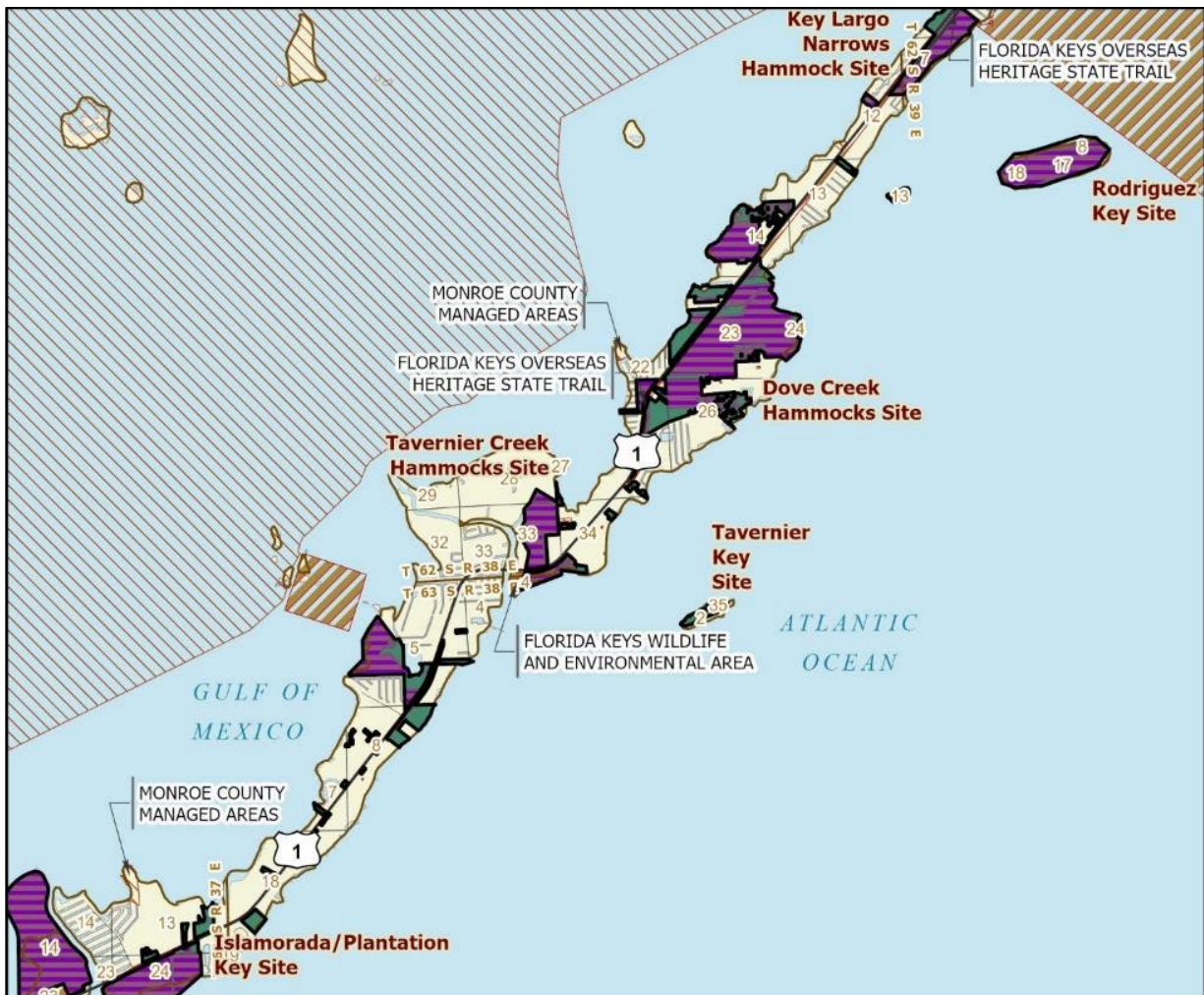
-  Florida Forever BOT Project Boundary
-  Acquired for Conservation (Fee Simple)
-  Essential Parcel(s) Remaining
-  State Owned Conservation Lands
-  Other Conservation Lands



FEBRUARY 2022



Map 2: FNAI, February 2022



FLORIDA KEYS ECOSYSTEM: MAP 2

MONROE COUNTY

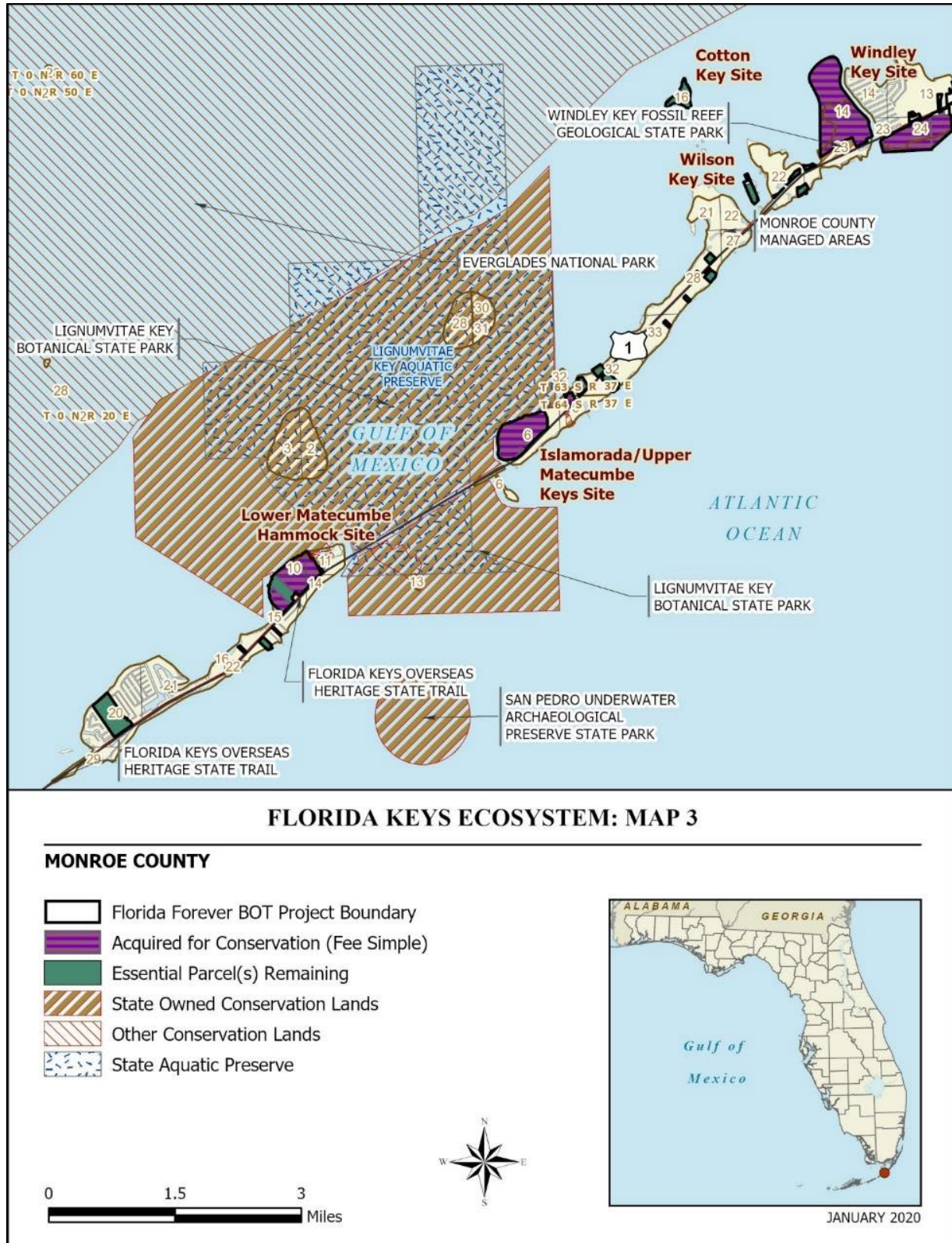
-  Florida Forever BOT Project Boundary
-  Acquired for Conservation (Fee Simple)
-  Essential Parcel(s) Remaining
-  State Owned Conservation Lands
-  Other Conservation Lands



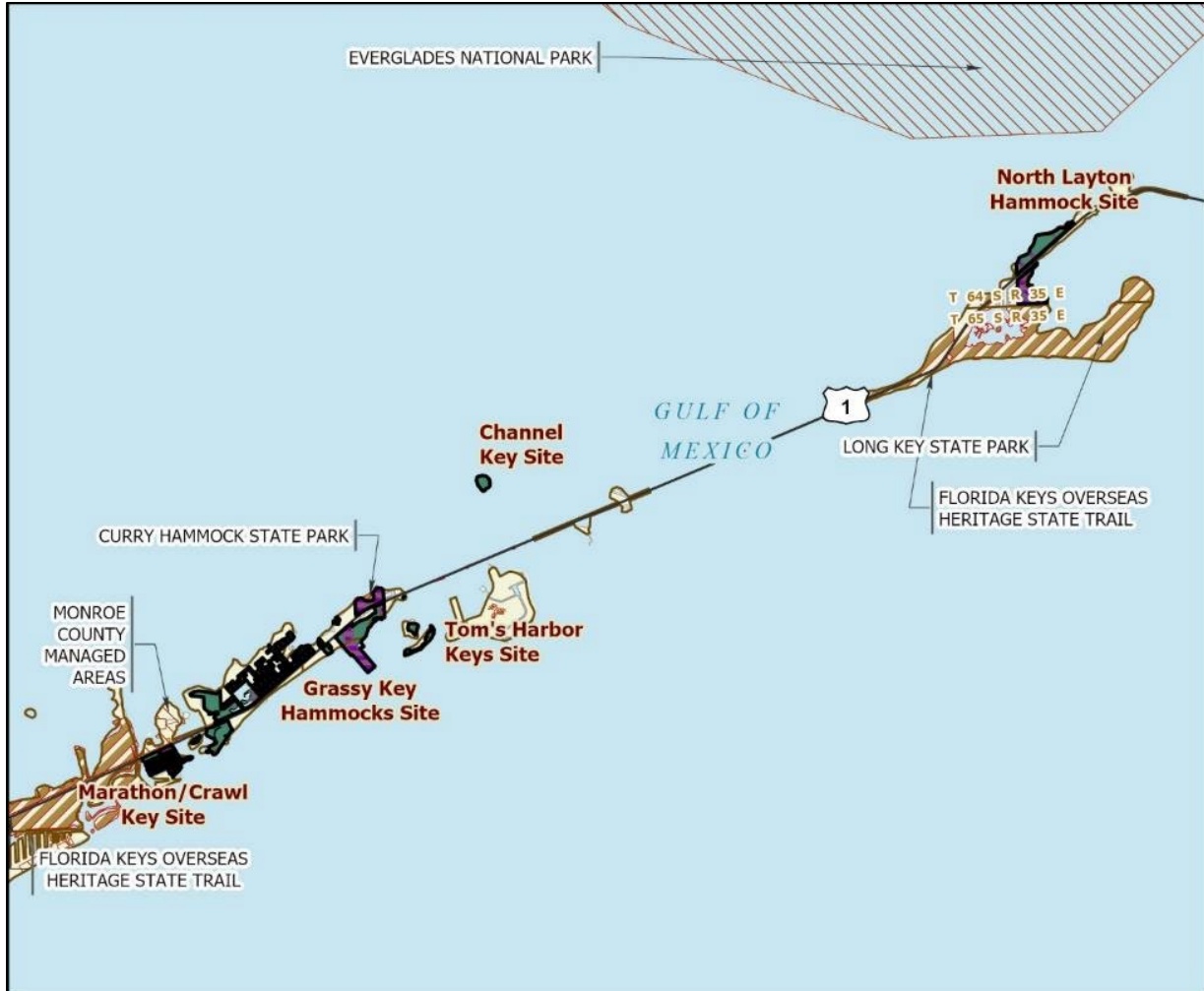
JANUARY 2020

Map 3: FNAI, January 2020





Map 4: FNAI, January 2020



FLORIDA KEYS ECOSYSTEM: MAP 4

MONROE COUNTY

-  Florida Forever BOT Project Boundary
-  Acquired for Conservation (Fee Simple)
-  Essential Parcel(s) Remaining
-  State Owned Conservation Lands
-  Other Conservation Lands



JANUARY 2020



Map 5: FNAI, January 2020





FLORIDA KEYS ECOSYSTEM: MAP 5

MONROE COUNTY

-  Florida Forever BOT Project Boundary
-  Acquired for Conservation (Fee Simple)
-  Essential Parcel(s) Remaining
-  State Owned Conservation Lands
-  Other Conservation Lands

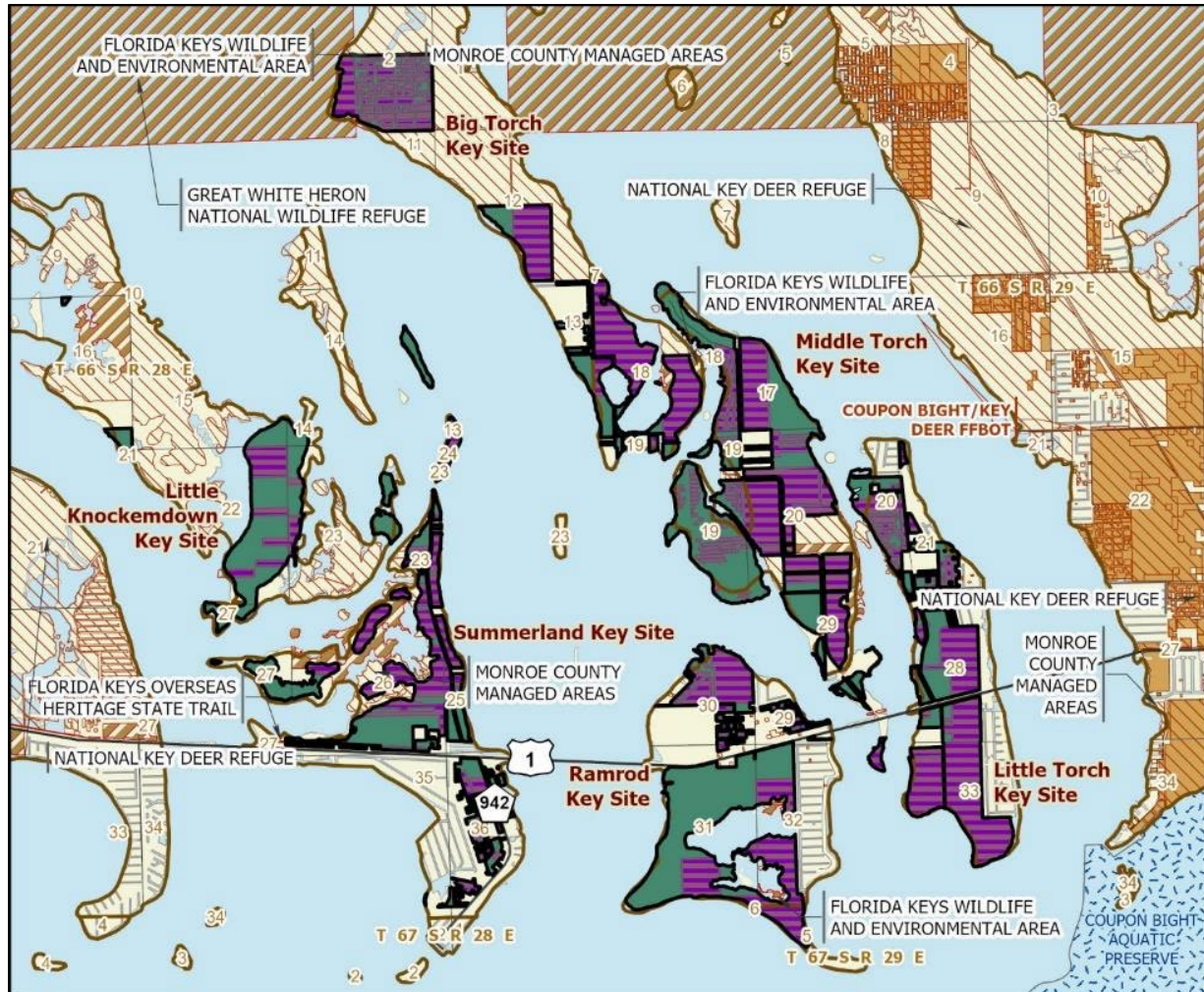


JANUARY 2020



Map 6: FNAI, January 2020





FLORIDA KEYS ECOSYSTEM: MAP 6

MONROE COUNTY

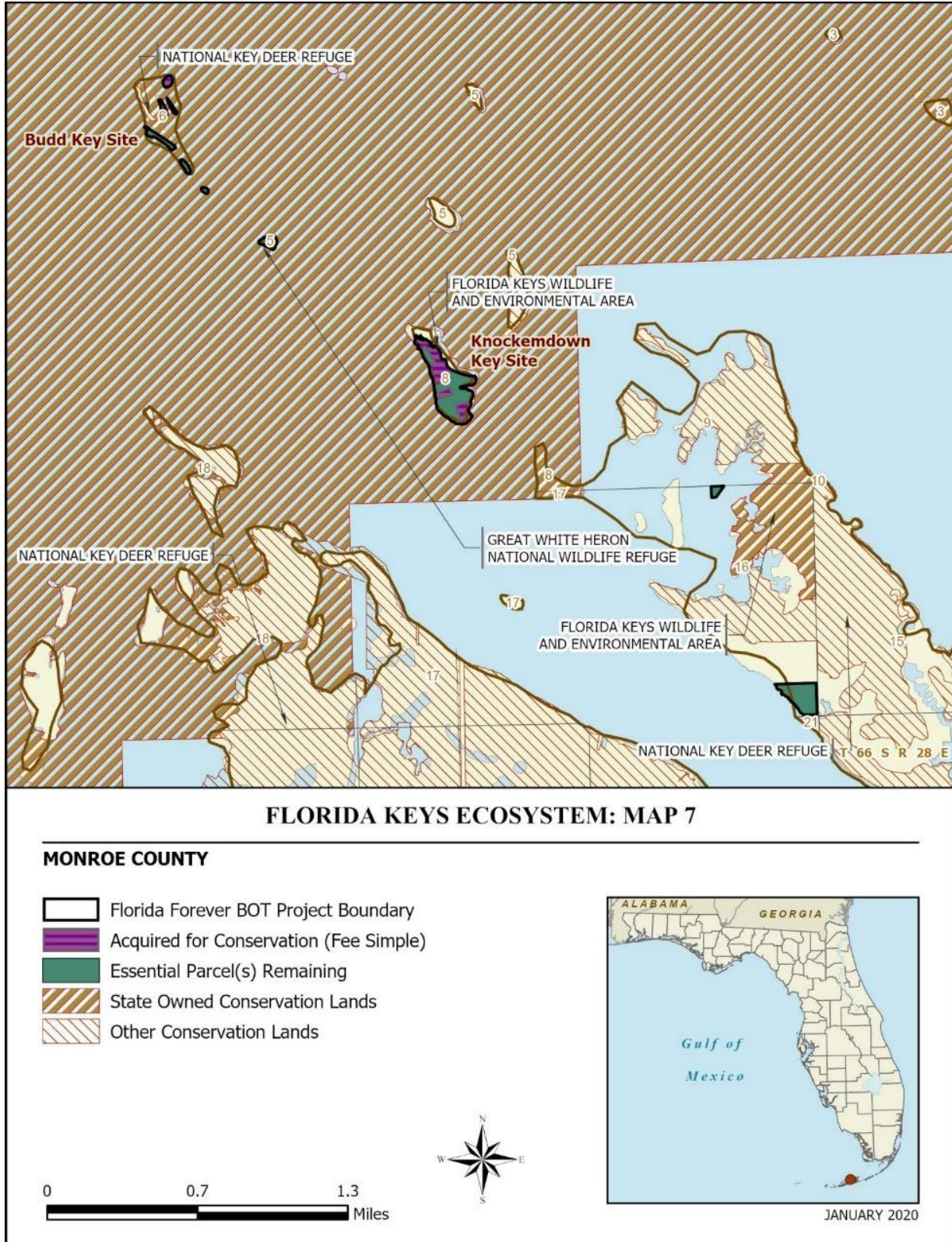
-  Florida Forever BOT Project Boundary
-  Acquired for Conservation (Fee Simple)
-  Essential Parcel(s) Remaining
-  State Owned Conservation Lands
-  Other Conservation Lands
-  Other Florida Forever BOT Projects
-  State Aquatic Preserve



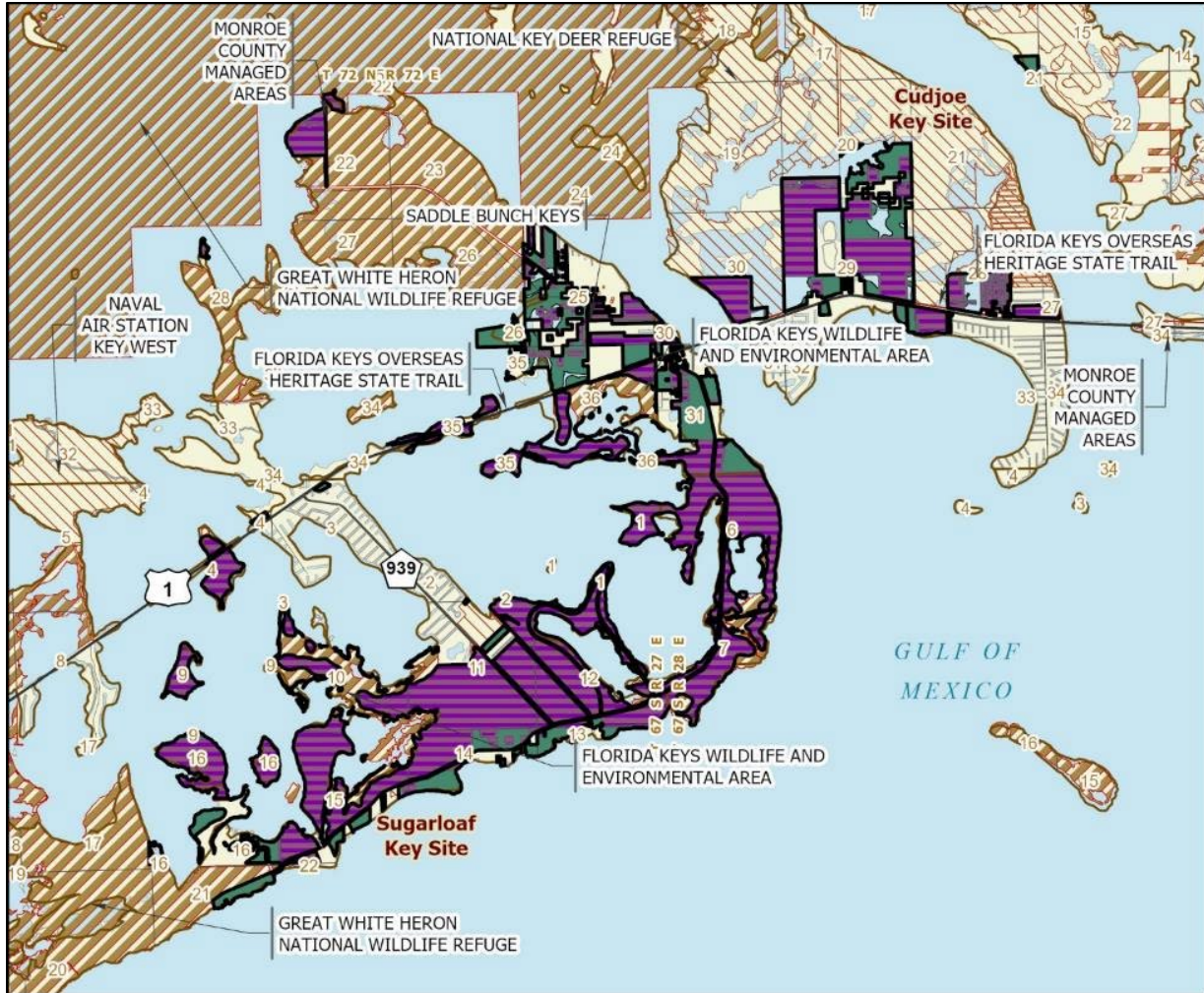
JANUARY 2020

Map 7: FNAI, January 2020





Map 8: FNAI, January 2020



FLORIDA KEYS ECOSYSTEM: MAP 8

MONROE COUNTY

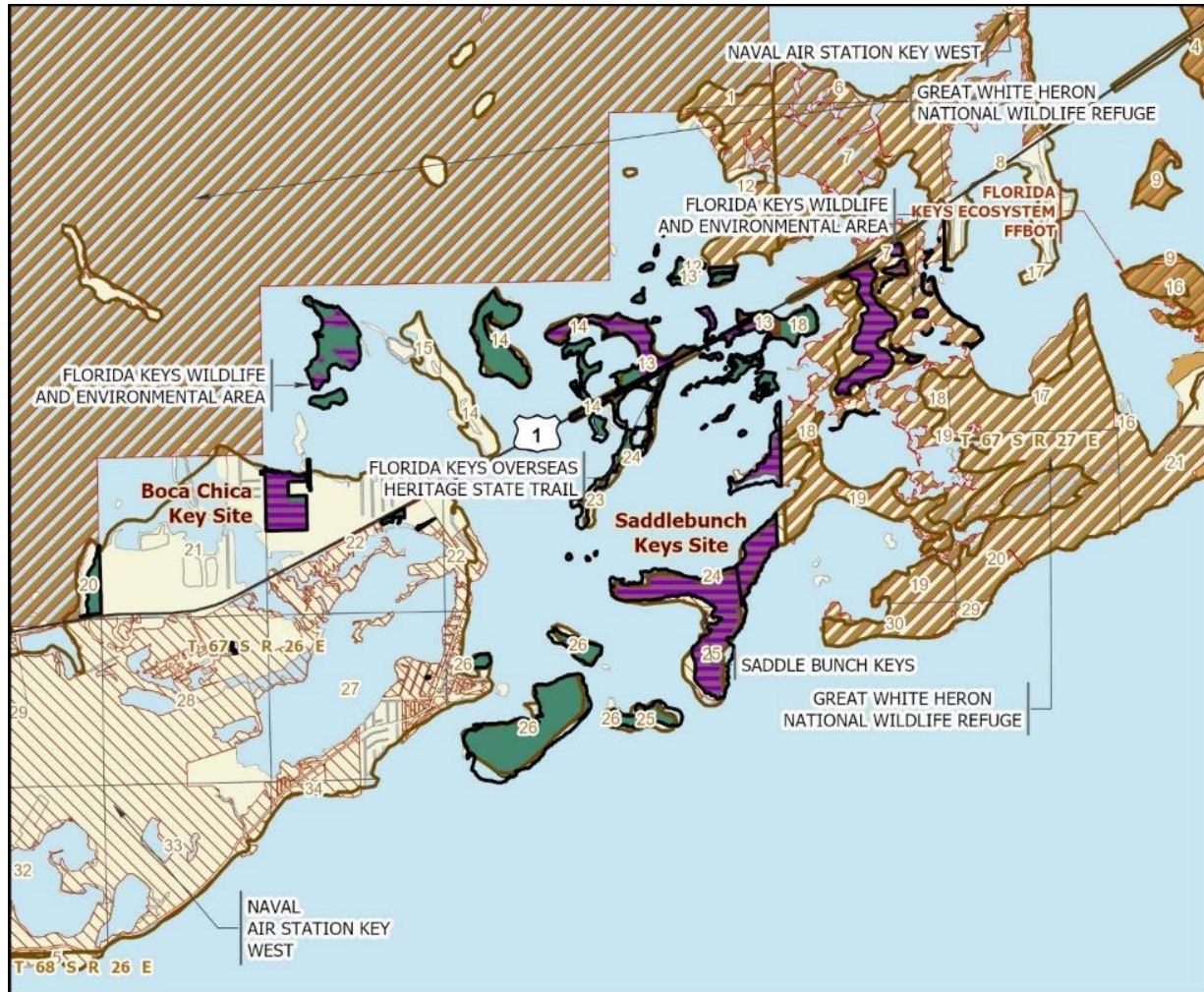
-  Florida Forever BOT Project Boundary
-  Acquired for Conservation (Fee Simple)
-  Essential Parcel(s) Remaining
-  State Owned Conservation Lands
-  Other Conservation Lands
-  Other Florida Forever BOT Projects



JANUARY 2020



Map 9: FNAI, January 2020



FLORIDA KEYS ECOSYSTEM: MAP 9

MONROE COUNTY

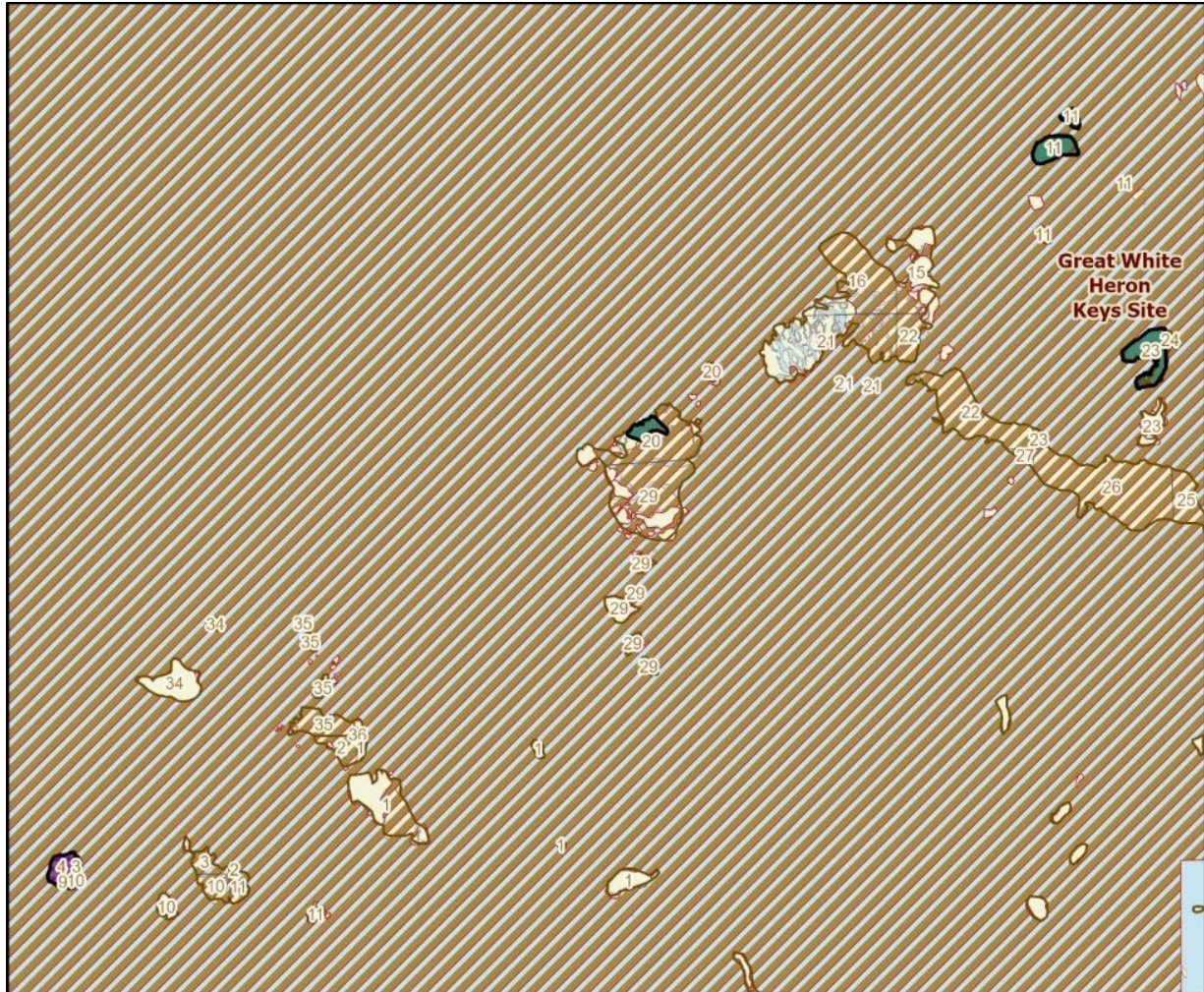
-  Florida Forever BOT Project Boundary
-  Acquired for Conservation (Fee Simple)
-  Essential Parcel(s) Remaining
-  State Owned Conservation Lands
-  Other Conservation Lands
-  Other Florida Forever BOT Projects



JANUARY 2020




Map 10: FNAI, January 2020



FLORIDA KEYS ECOSYSTEM: MAP 10

MONROE COUNTY

-  Florida Forever BOT Project Boundary
-  Acquired for Conservation (Fee Simple)
-  Essential Parcel(s) Remaining
-  State Owned Conservation Lands
-  Other Florida Forever BOT Projects



Map 11: FNAI, January 2020