

Southeastern Bat Maternity Caves

Critical Natural Lands

Alachua, Citrus, Jackson, Marion, Sumter

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	1994
<i>Project Acres</i>	598
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	0
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$0
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	598
<i>2020 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$3,435,371

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Southeastern Bat Maternity Caves project will conserve six caves and surrounding lands to ensure the survival of both the bats and other species that rely on these caves for protection and breeding. Caves where southeastern bats rear their young also protect several other rare animals such as the gray bat and cave-dwelling crayfish. These caves and are easily damaged by vandals, the project would limit access to the caves and preserve a portion of this unique lightless world.

General Description

Every spring, adult female southeastern bats leave their colonies and move to certain caves where they bear and raise their young. For the species to survive, these maternity roosts must be protected from human disturbance. The six caves in this project are used as maternity roosts by these bats. The caves also harbor several other rare and endangered animals and plants, including the federally endangered gray bat and rare cave-dwelling crayfish and amphipods. The Gerome's Cave site has an outstanding example of upland hardwood forest, the Jennings's Cave site has intact sandhill, and the Sneads Cave site supports good floodplain forest and floodplain swamp. Three archaeological sites are known from Gerome's Cave. Vandalism is the greatest threat to the caves.

FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

FNAI Elements	Score
Gray bat	G3G4/S1
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
Florida cave isopod	G1G2/S1S2
Light-fleeing cave crayfish	G1G2/S1S2
North Florida spider cave crayfish	G2/S2
Dougherty Plain cave crayfish	G2G3/S2
<i>false rue-anemone</i>	G5/S1
Florida cave amphipod	G2G3/S2S3
Hobbs's cave amphipod	G2G3/S2S3
Southeastern myotis	G4/S3

Public Use

The caves will be managed as WEAs. They are generally not suitable for recreation, but some could have nature trails. Grant's Cave, the less-than-fee parcel, qualifies as a WEA. Any public use will be negotiated with the landowner, but this cave is probably not suitable for public recreation.

Acquisition Planning

Overall, acquisition efforts should concentrate on purchasing occupied caves first. Sneads Cave—Occupied; Catacombs—Occupied; Sumter County Cave—Vacant; Sweet Gum Cave—Vacant; Gerome's Cave—Vacant; Jennings's Cave—Vacant.

1996

On October 30, 1996, the LAMAC adopted criteria for establishing a Less-Than-Fee category: 1) resource value of the project/tract can be adequately protected through a less-than-fee instrument; 2) seller is willing to accept a less-than-fee-simple instrument and the LAMAC has determined that the project's or site's acquisition objectives can be met by acquiring a less-than-fee interest; and 3) manager is willing to oversee a less-than-fee simple instrument.

On December 5, 1996, the LAMAC transferred Grant's Cave, consisting of two ownerships, to the Less-Than-Fee category.

2002

On June 6, 2002, the ARC combined the Less-Than-Fee project to the Group B Full Fee project. It included the following:

- 1) Sweet Gum Cave (Citrus County)—the site consists of approximately 10 acres,
- 2) 1 parcel and 1 owner. Gerome's Cave (Jackson County)—the site consists of approximately 160 acres, 5 parcels, and 4 owners.
- 3) Sneads Cave (Jackson County)—the site consists of approximately 80 acres, 1 parcel, and 1 owner.
- 4) Catacombs Cave (Marion County)—the site consists of approximately 10 acres, 2 parcels, and 2 owners.



- 5) Jennings' Cave (Marion County)—the site consists of approximately 89 acres, 79 parcels, and 70 owners.
- 6) Sumter County Cave (Sumter County)—the site consists of approximately 362 acres, 4 parcels, and 3 owners.

2003

On December 5, 2003, the ARC moved the project to the Group A list.

2011

On December 9, 2011, the ARC placed this project in the Critical Natural Lands category of projects.

Coordination

NWFWMD will be an acquisition partner on the Gerome's Cave site. There are no acquisition partners for the less-than-fee parcels.

Management Policy Statement

The primary goal of management of the Southeastern Bat Maternity Caves project is to conserve and protect significant habitat for native species or endangered and threatened species.

Manager(s)

FWC will manage the full fee acquisitions and OES will monitor the less than fee acquisitions.

Management Prospectus**Qualifications for state designation**

The sensitive wildlife resources of the Southeastern Bat Maternity Caves—southeastern bats and other rare cave-dwelling animals—qualify them as wildlife and environmental areas.

Conditions affecting intensity of management

The caves will require protection from vandalism. Natural communities around some of the cave entrances will require restoration.

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

Initial management activities will concentrate on securing each cave site with chain link fencing, posting signs, and removing trash and debris from the caves and surrounding areas. Each cave also will be monitored to determine its current usage by bats and each site's natural resources, including listed species of flora and fauna, will be inventoried. Current management is based on ongoing and previous monitoring information. A management plan will be developed outlining long-term management strategies for the project on a cave-by-cave basis. Management considerations will include, but will not be limited to, site protection, biological monitoring, educational and recreational opportunities, and habitat restoration or enhancement.

Revenue-generating potential

No significant revenue is currently being generated. However, future management activities will include educational and recreational opportunities that could generate revenue.



Cooperators in management activities

No other local, state or federal agencies are currently participating in the management of this project.

NFWFMD proposes to cooperate in the management of Gerome’s Cave in Jackson County.

Management Cost Summary

<u>FWC</u>	<u>Startup</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
Source of Funds	CARL	CARL
Salary	\$0	\$0
OPS	\$14,784	\$14,784
Expense	\$4,725	\$4,725
OCO	\$30,240	\$0
FCO	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	\$49,749	\$19,509

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





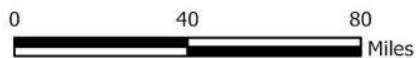
SOUTHEASTERN BAT MATERNITY CAVES: OVERVIEW

ALACHUA, CITRUS, JACKSON, MARION, AND SUMTER COUNTIES

- Map 1 Geromes Cave Site
- Map 2 Sneads Cave Site
- Map 3 Grants Cave Site
- Map 4 Jennings Cave Site
- Map 5 Catacombs Cave Site
- Map 6 Sweet Gum Cave Site
- Map 7 Sumter County Cave Site

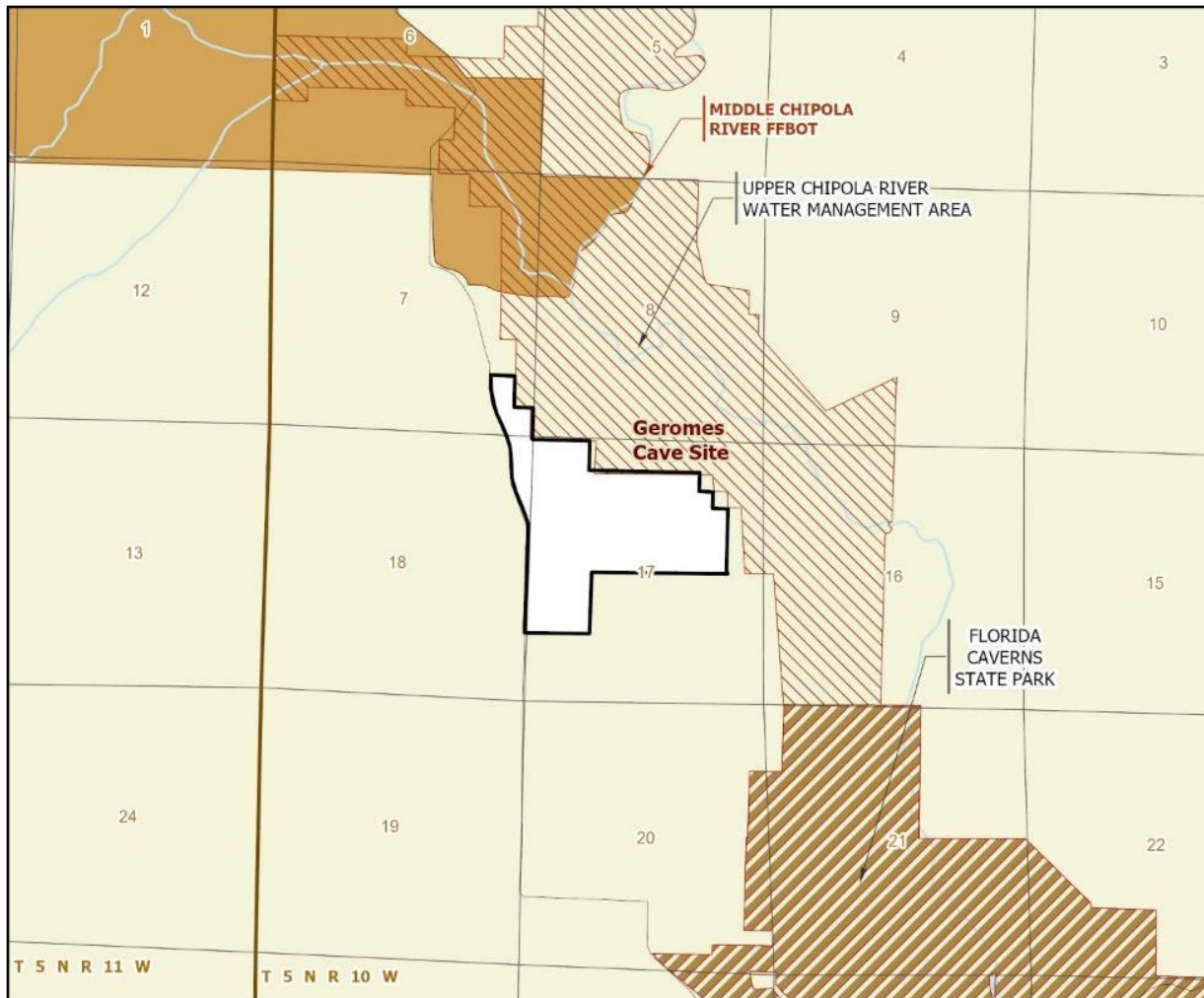


JANUARY 2020



Map 1: FNAI, January 2020





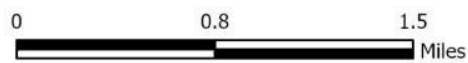
SOUTHEASTERN BAT MATERNITY CAVES: MAP 1

JACKSON COUNTY

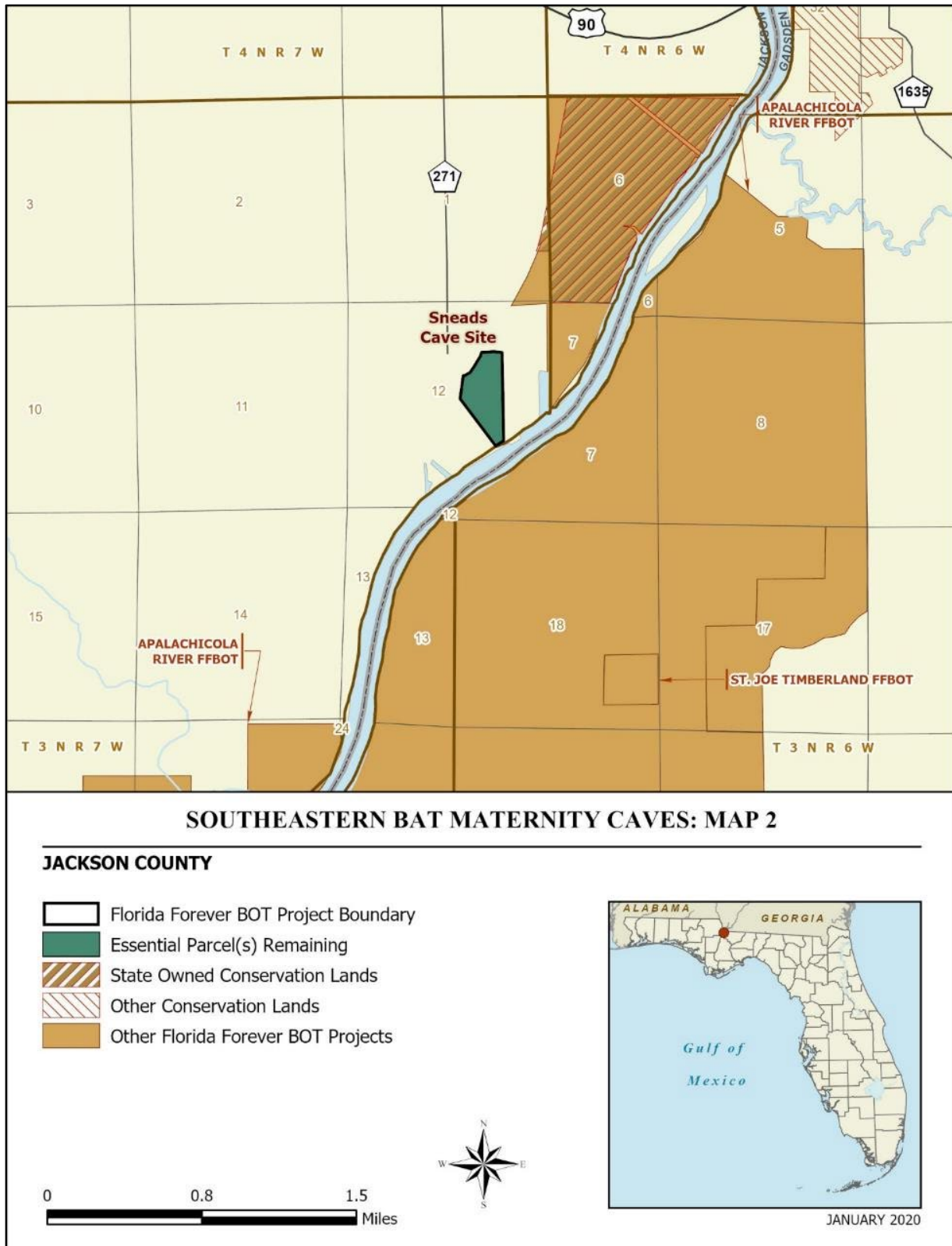
-  Florida Forever BOT Project Boundary
-  State Owned Conservation Lands
-  Other Conservation Lands
-  Other Florida Forever BOT Projects



JANUARY 2020

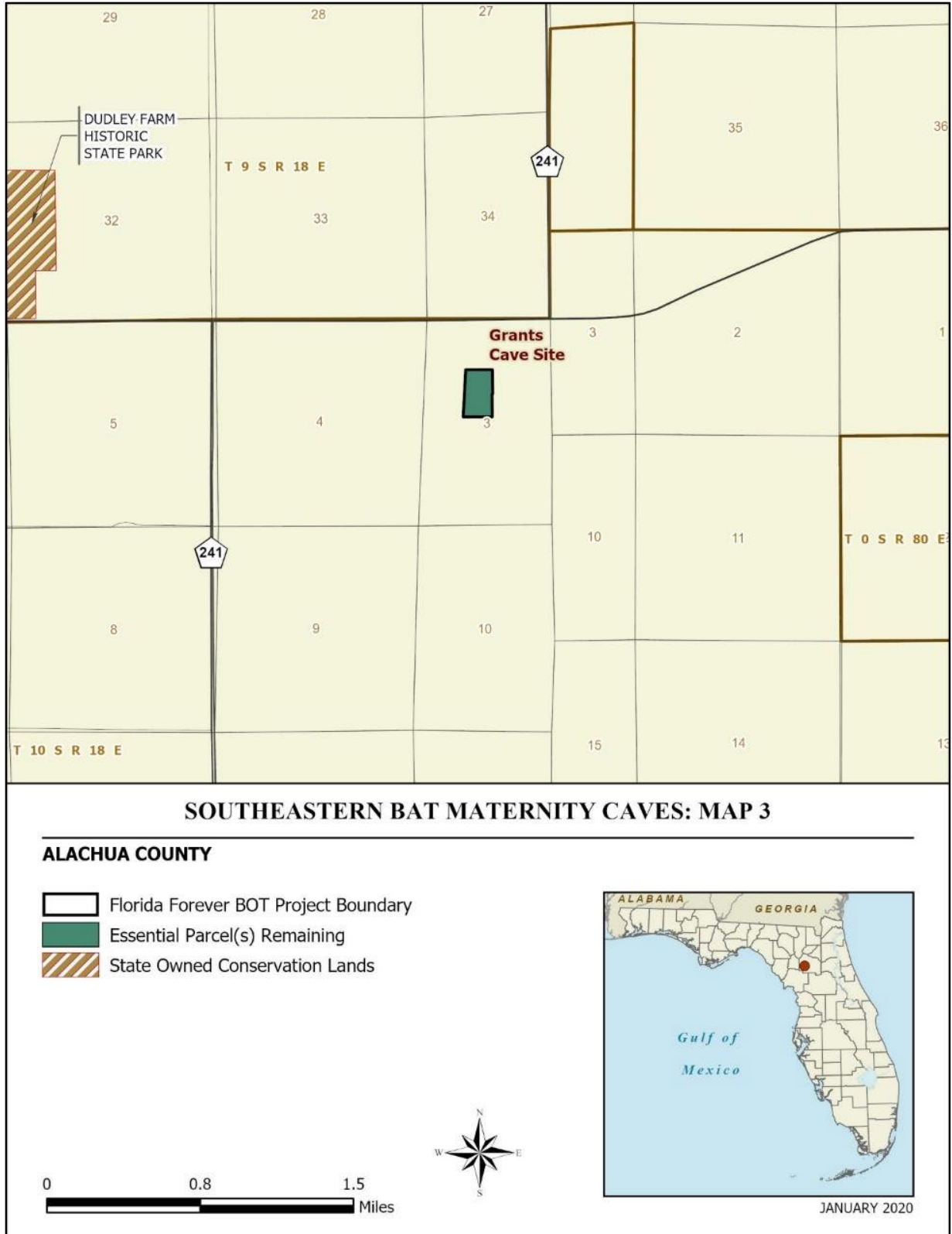


Map 2: FNAI, January 2020

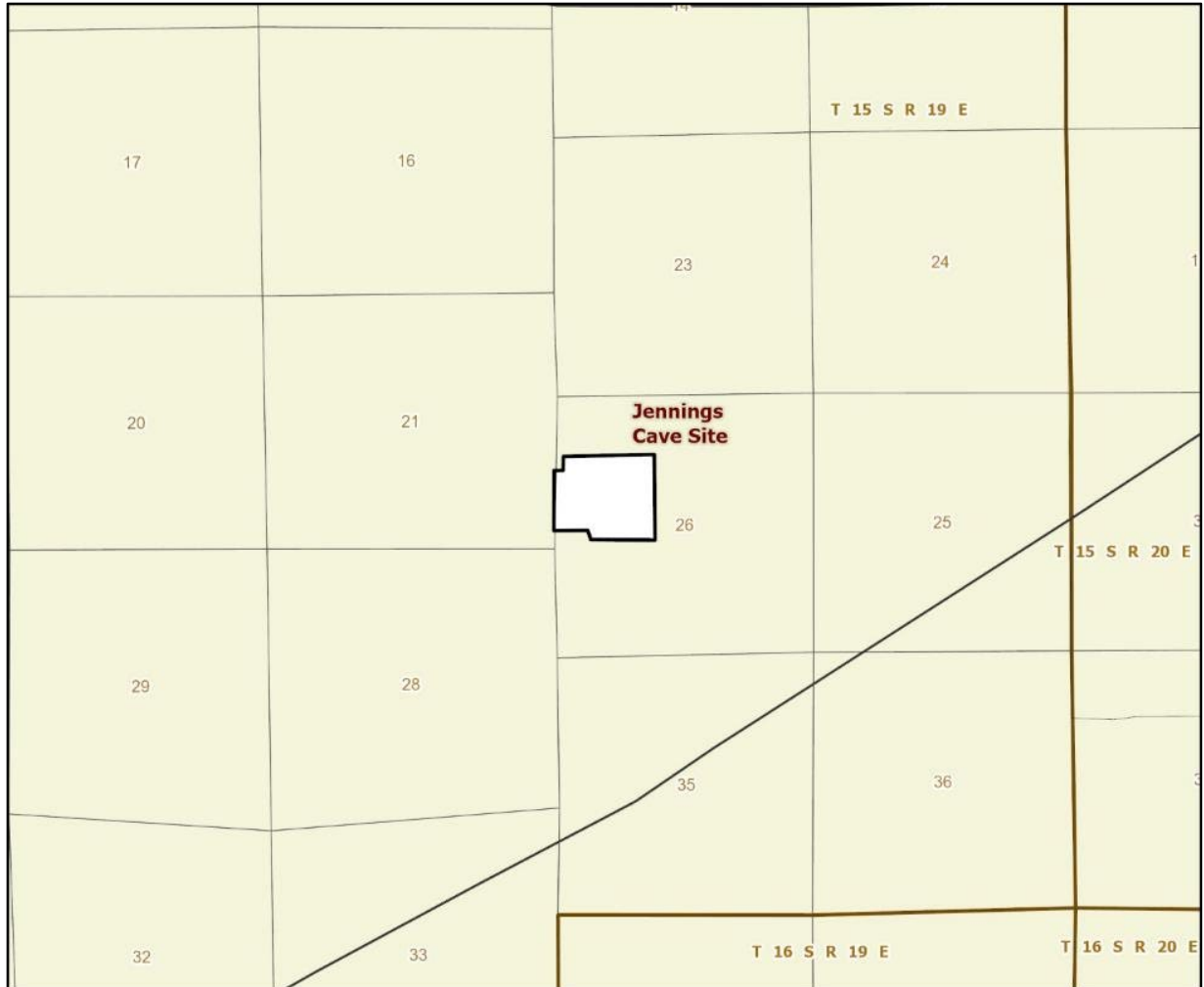


Map 3: FNAI, January 2020





Map 4: FNAI, January 2020



SOUTHEASTERN BAT MATERNITY CAVES: MAP 4

MARION COUNTY

 Florida Forever BOT Project Boundary

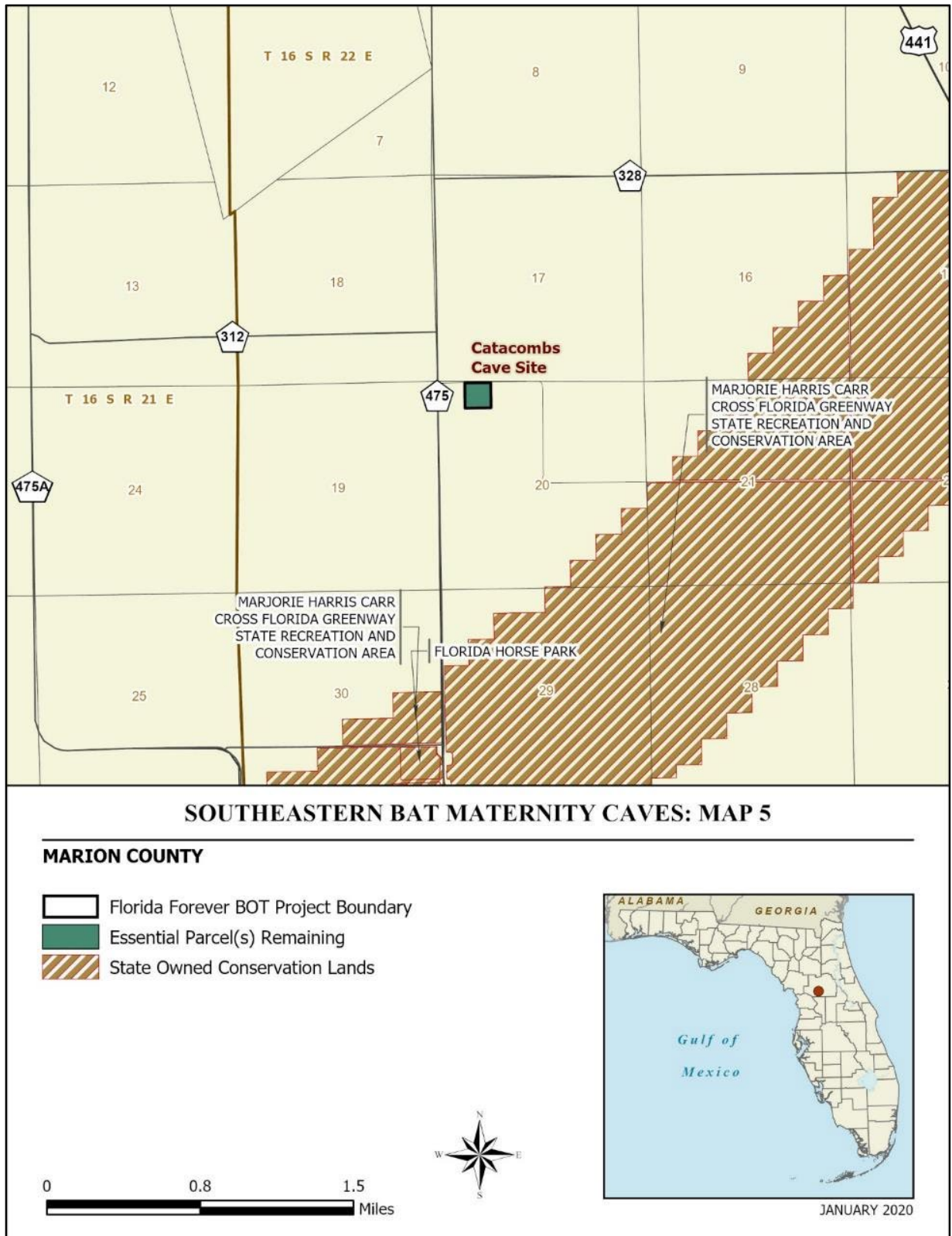


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Map 5: FNAI, January 2020








Map 6: FNAI, January 2020





SOUTHEASTERN BAT MATERNITY CAVES: MAP 6

CITRUS COUNTY

-  Florida Forever BOT Project Boundary
-  Essential Parcel(s) Remaining
-  State Owned Conservation Lands



JANUARY 2020

Map 7: FNAI, January 2020





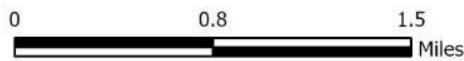
SOUTHEASTERN BAT MATERNITY CAVES: MAP 7

SUMTER COUNTY

-  Florida Forever BOT Project Boundary
-  State Owned Conservation Lands
-  Other Conservation Lands
-  Other Florida Forever BOT Projects



MARCH 2021



Map 8: FNAI, March 2021