

Florida's First Magnitude Springs

Partnerships and Regional Incentives

Bay, Citrus, Columbia, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Hernando, Jackson, Lafayette, Lake, Leon, Levy, Madison, Marion, Suwannee, Wakulla, Walton and Washington Counties

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	<i>1991</i>
<i>Project Acres</i>	<i>18,575</i>
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	<i>11,804</i>
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	<i>6,771</i>
<i>2024 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	<i>\$60,853,292</i>

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Florida's First Magnitude Springs project will protect large springs of clear, continuously flowing water that are among Florida's most famous and important natural and recreational resources. The cavernous, water-filled rock of the Floridan Aquifer supplies the largest springs. By preserving land around the springs, this project will aid in the protection of springs, karst windows and the Floridan Aquifer from the effects of commercial, residential and agricultural runoff; clearcutting and mining; and unsupervised recreation. This project will ensure that Floridians and visitors from all over the world will be able to enjoy Florida springs for years to come.

General Description

The thick, water-filled limestone underlying Florida has created more large springs (including river rises and karst windows) than any other state or country. Those discharging an average of 100 cubic feet of water per second are called first-magnitude springs. The 33 recognized first-magnitude springs in Florida are scattered in the northern peninsula and the eastern panhandle, where the limestone of the Floridan Aquifer arches close to the surface. Each day, these 33 springs send out much more water than is used for drinking water by all the people in the state. The springs, with generally clear, continuously flowing waters, are among Florida's most important natural resources and are famous tourist attractions. The tracts harbor at least seven Florida Natural Areas Inventory-listed plants and 18 animals. The Weeki Wachee tract includes one of the best remaining scrubs on Florida's West Coast. Several archaeological or historic sites are also known from these springs, with some remains dating to over 2,000 years ago. All these springs are vulnerable to development and unsupervised use.





FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<u>FNAI Elements</u>	<u>Score</u>
Reticulated flatwoods salamander	G2/S1
Florida manatee	G2G3T2/S2S3
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Florida mouse	G3/S3
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
Suwannee moccasinshell	G1/S1
Withlacoochee tiny sand-loving scarab	G1/S1
Woodville karst cave crayfish	G1/S1
Jackson County cave amphipod	G1G2/S1
Dougherty Plain cave amphipod	G1G2/S1
Gulf moccasinshell	G2/S1
Oval pigtoe	G2/S1

Public Use

The project sites are designated for use as state parks, geological sites and wildlife and environmental areas with high recreational potential for swimming, canoeing, camping and nature appreciation.

Acquisition Planning

1990

On December 7, 1990, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council added the Florida's First Magnitude Springs – Phase I project to the Conservation and Recreational Lands (CARL) Priority List. This fee-simple acquisition, sponsored by the former Department of Environmental Regulation, consisted of approximately 2,907 acres, 36 landowners, 136 parcels and a taxable value of \$5,718,493.

In 1990, five springs made up the project: Falmouth Spring (Suwannee County, 75 acres, one parcel, one landowner, \$45,000 taxable value); Fanning Springs (Levy County, 525 acres, 98 parcels, 17 landowners, \$1,187,610 taxable value); Gainer Springs (Bay County, 1,258 acres, 19 parcels, seven landowners, \$3,256,739 taxable value); River Sink Spring (Wakulla County, 105 acres, four parcels, four landowners, \$64,956 taxable value); and St. Marks Springs (Leon County, 890 acres, 19 parcels, six landowners, \$1,164,188 taxable value).

According to the 1990 Project Design document, the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP) will manage St. Marks Springs. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) will manage River Sink Spring. DRP and the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) will manage Fanning Springs. A lead manager has not been determined for Falmouth Springs. The lead manager is still unclear for Gainer Springs; however, the Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWWMD) and Bay County both expressed an interest. A portion of the Fanning Springs sites have been acquired. NFWWMD has acquired 214 acres of the Gainer Springs sites.



**1991**

On June 28, 1991, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council approved a 218-acre addition to the Falmouth Springs site, located in Suwannee County, within the project boundary. It was sponsored by the landowner, Nemours Foundation, who already has acreage within the current boundary and is not willing to sell only a portion of the tract. The taxable value of the addition is \$129,600. SRWMD will manage if acquired.

1992

On December 10, 1992, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council approved Phase II that added three springs, 1,880 acres with a taxable value of \$5,180,452. This addition consisted of Jackson Blue Springs (Jackson County, 348 acres, three parcels, two landowners, \$256,556 taxable value); Troy Spring (Lafayette County, 265 acres, six parcels, two landowners, \$261,897 taxable value); and Weeki Wachee Springs (Hernando County, 1,267 acres, 59 parcels, 24 landowners, \$4,661,999 taxable value). DRP will manage the Weeki Wachee Springs and Troy Spring site. Jackson County will manage the Jackson Blue Springs sites. Portions of Troy Spring, Weeki Wachee Springs and Jackson Blue Springs sites have been acquired.

On December 10, 1992, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council also approved a fee-simple, 1,635-acre addition (Gainer Springs Expansion) and combined it with the Gainer Springs site. Most of the addition is owned by Hunt Petroleum/Rosewood Timber Co. and St. Joe Paper. There are also several small ownerships. The estimated taxable value is \$3,000,000. Phase I was combined with the new Florida's First Magnitude Springs Phase II. The springs are in Bay and Washington counties. NFWMD will manage the 214-acre Harder tract that it acquired.

1995

On October 30, 1995, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council approved a fee-simple, 20-acre addition (Jackson Blue Springs) to the project boundary in Jackson County. It was sponsored by the two landowners, Carolyn D. Huff and Wayne Mixon, located along Spring Run of Merritt's Mill Pond in Jackson County, and has a taxable value of \$258,790. Jackson County will manage the addition. Both properties were acquired in 1997.

1998

On December 3, 1998, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council transferred the St. Marks Springs, River Sink Spring, Fanning Springs and Gainer Springs sites to the Negotiation Impasse group.

1999

On July 29, 1999, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council approved a fee-simple, 65-acre addition (Madison Blue Springs) in Madison County to the project, sponsored by the landowners' representative. It contains 45 parcels, 22 landowners and a taxable value of \$604,000. The addition was designated essential and added to the Priority portion of the project. Madison County committed to





managing back in 1999, of which at that time approximately 44 acres had been acquired. DRP now manages as part of Madison Blue Spring State Park.

On December 9, 1999, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council removed land owned by the St. Joe Company (740 acres) from the project and placed it in the St. Joe Timberland CARL project.

2000

On August 22, 2000, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) approved a fee-simple, 40-acre addition (Cypress Spring) in Washington County to the project boundary. The addition was sponsored by Conservation Properties for the landowner, Harold Vickers, and had a taxable value of \$131,400. Mr. Vickers was willing to manage it if acquired; however, the property was sold to a third party in 2002.

2003

On April 18, 2003, ARC approved a fee-simple, 200-acre addition (Morrison Springs) in Walton County to the project boundary with a taxable value of \$63,880. The addition was sponsored by Conservation Properties, Inc. and Walton County will manage the site. Also on April 18, 2003, ARC approved a fee-simple, 4,552-acre addition (Silver Springs Addition) north of Silver Springs in Marion County to the project boundary. The addition was sponsored by the Silver Springs Basin Working Group, consisting of one landowner, Avatar Properties Inc., and had a taxable value of \$3,406,945. FFS will manage this if acquired.

On August 15, 2003, ARC approved a fee-simple, 172-acre addition (Lafayette Blue Springs) in Lafayette County to the project boundary. The addition was sponsored by Conservation Properties, consisting of one landowner, Union Land and Timber Corp., nine parcels and a taxable value of \$97,000. Lafayette County committed to managing back in 2003, if it were to be acquired. DRP now manages as part of Lafayette Blue Springs State Park.

On October 17, 2003, ARC approved a fee-simple, 365-acre addition (Silver Springs Addition No. 2) in Marion County to the project boundary. The addition was sponsored by the Silver Springs Basin Working Group and the Marion County Audubon, Inc., consisted of one landowner, Seldin, two parcels and a taxable value of \$2,889,223. Marion County will manage the site. In 2005, 330 acres were acquired.

On December 5, 2003, ARC approved a fee-simple, 1,717-acre addition (Jackson Blue Springs) in Jackson County to the project boundary. The addition, sponsored by Conservation Properties, consisted of 11 parcels, five landowners (Edinburgh Investment Corp; AJ Green; Howard Muncaster Partnership; LH Alford Farms Inc.; and Doyle Green), and a taxable value of \$303,367. Jackson County will manage it if acquired.

2004

On October 15, 2004, ARC approved a fee-simple, 5-acre addition (Church Sink) in Leon County to the project boundary. The addition was sponsored by the landowner, J. Lee Vause Trust, and consisted of one parcel, and a taxable value of \$47,700. Leon County will manage if acquired.





2006

On April 17, 2006, NFWFMD established the Patronis conservation easement (882 acres), of which approximately 27.5 acres are within the project boundary.

On October 13, 2006, ARC approved a fee-simple 305-acre addition (Hardee Spring) to the boundary in Hamilton County. The addition was sponsored by Harold Hardee and involved one parcel with a taxable value of \$57,001. The Florida Forest Service (FFS) would manage the site as part of the Twin Rivers State Forest if acquired. In July 2007, the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (BOT) acquired 4,471 acres of the Avatar property in Marion County.

2009

On February 25, 2009, the BOT acquired 54.74 acres from the Rakestraw family in the St. Marks Site.

2010

On January 6, 2010, FFS purchased approximately 1 acre for \$16,065 from Kaiser/The Nature Conservancy in the Indian Lake State Forest. FFS will manage the purchase.

On May 11, 2010, FFS purchased 0.12 acres for \$2,550 and will manage the purchase.

In July 2010, FFS purchased two parcels (0.23 acres for \$5,100 and 0.12 acres for \$2,800) and will manage both.

On November 15, 2011, FFS purchased 0.23 acres in Indian Lake State Forest (Potter - \$5,100) and will manage the purchase.

In October 2010, FFS purchased five parcels (Silver Spring Addition - Bloom, Dinkins, Dupras, Hanson and Szymialis ownerships) making 0.5 acres for a combined \$10,200 and will manage all.

In November 2010, FFS purchased two parcels (Silver Spring Addition - Stovall, Landry) totaling 0.29 acres for \$6,375 and will manage these.

2011

On May 2, 2011, FFS purchased and will manage 0.23 acres (Jean and Giselle Raymond - \$12,000).

On August 3, 2011, the Felburn Foundation donated 2.42 acres in Silver Springs (valued at \$100,000) for FFS to manage.

On September 16, 2011, DRP purchased 55.73 acres (Gerrell Plantation, Inc. - \$457,000) and will manage as an addition to Natural Bridge Historic State Park.

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

2012

On April 20, 2012, ARC added 63.4 acres to the project that had been authorized for sale from USFS.



**2013**

On February 15, 2013, ARC changed the design of the Florida's First Magnitude Springs project in Madison County to add the 608-acre Damascus Peanut Tract, then found that conveying the tract to SRWMD in exchange for the 670-acre Ellaville tract would make a greater conservation value and that the Damascus Peanut Tract was no longer needed for conservation by the BOT.

2014

In April 2014, ARC agreed to add the 360-acre Brunson Landing Tract on Holmes Creek, north of Vernon, to the project boundary to protect water resources from development. It provides over 2,200 feet of frontage along Homes Creek and is adjacent to NFWMD land. It would also be managed by NFWMD if acquired.

2015

On June 19, 2015, ARC voted to add the 405-acre Gilchrist Blue Springs Park on the Santa Fe River in Gilchrist County to the Florida's First Magnitude Springs project. The park has a just value of \$1,361,547 and has a second-magnitude spring and two smaller springs. Gilchrist Blue Springs was then added by ARC to the boundary of the existing Florida's First Magnitude Springs project. The 470-acre Silver Springs Sandhill on the edge of the city of Ocala was approved by ARC for fee-simple acquisition and combined with the Florida's First Magnitude Springs project.

2017

On October 2, 2017, the state purchased 465 acres of the Sandhill tract to be managed by Marion County as part of Coehadjoe Park.

On October 6, 2017, DEP closed on 399 acres in Gilchrist County, which became Florida's newest state park, Ruth B. Kirby Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park.

On October 20, 2017, ARC approved the Springs Coast Research Station as a Florida Forever project. The project had an estimated tax value of \$643,154. This 28-acre parcel in southwest Citrus County is north of the town of Chassahowitzka. It shares northern and western boundaries with the Chassahowitzka River and Coastal Swamps, which is managed by the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD). The parcel is at the edge of Crab Creek, which is the site of Crab Spring, part of the Chassahowitzka first magnitude spring group. The facilities on the property have been well maintained, and the campus layout and functions of the residence and satellite buildings would make it suitable as a research center for springs systems and habitats. The project was proposed by Wildlands Conservation, a nonprofit conservation group based in Tampa, who would manage the property as a springs research campus in coordination with several educational institutions, as well as protecting the surrounding public lands and underwater acreage.

On December 14, 2017, ARC voted to add the 28-acre Springs Coast Research Station Florida Forever project boundary to that of the Florida's First Magnitude Springs project.





In 2017, a total of 863.45 acres in this project were acquired using Florida Forever program funding.

2018

On May 23, 2018, NFWFMD established the Hodson conservation easement (228.9 acres), of which approximately 171.9 acres are within the project boundary.

On June 15, 2018, ARC members voted to add 556 acres, the Santa Fe Springs Tract that is on the north side of the Santa Fe River in Columbia County, to the project. FFS will manage this site through FFS' Suwannee Forestry Center if acquired; however, it may be managed as a standalone forest property. FFS estimates the budget needs for the one year of interim management to require a total of \$284,348 from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund (one full-time employee at \$44,439, expenses of \$71,935 and Operating Capital Outlay of \$167,974).

2020

On October 9, 2020, ARC approved the addition of 37.6 acres that includes Mud Spring in Hernando County to the project boundary.

2022

On April 8, 2022, ARC approved the addition of five parcels totaling approximately 486 acres in Levy County with a tax assessed value of \$1,745,229 (Manatee Springs Addition).

On October 14, 2022, ARC approved the addition of 742 acres to the project boundary. This addition was located along the Suwannee River in Suwannee and Lafayette counties, contained multiple springs and had a combined tax assessed value of \$1,987,808.

2023

In December of 2023, ARC approved the addition of one parcel totaling approximately 310.07 acres in Levy County.

2024

On January 31, 2024, DEP acquired, in fee, 288.64 acres in Levy County from the Alachua Conservation Trust.

In June of 2024, ARC approved the addition of 25 parcels (Blais-Sorrel Spring) totaling approximately 50.22 acres in Columbia County.

Coordination

Hernando County has limited acquisition funds but is very supportive of state acquisition efforts. NFWFMD has acquired the 214-acre Harder tract in Gainer Springs.





Management Policy Statement

The primary goals of management of the project are to preserve land around springs, karst windows and springs to aid in the protection of the Floridan Aquifer from the effects of commercial, residential and agricultural runoff; clearcutting and mining; and unsupervised recreation.

Manager(s)

Mud Spring (Hernando County); Jackson Blue Springs (Jackson County); Church Sink (Leon County); Silver Springs Sandhill (Marion County); Morrison Spring (Walton County); Gilchrist Blue Springs Park, St. Marks Springs, Madison Blue Springs, Troy Spring, Lafayette Blue Springs, Weeki Wachee Springs and Horn Spring (DRP); Hardee Spring (FFS); River Sink Spring (USFS); Brunson Landing and Cypress Spring (leased from owner, managed by NFWFMD); Damascus Peanut Tract and Falmouth Spring (NFWFMD); Gainer Springs, Fanning Springs (DRP/NFWFMD); and Springs Coast Research (Wildlands Conservation).

Management Prospectus

Qualifications for State Designation

Gilchrist Blue Springs has a diversity of resources and recreational opportunities to qualify as a state park. The location of the Weeki Wachee project adjacent to the Chassahowitzka Wildlife and Environmental Area, as well as its sensitive natural resources, qualifies it as a wildlife and environmental area. River Sink Spring is a first-magnitude karst window. This qualifies it as a state geological site. St. Marks, Fanning, Troy, Falmouth and Gainer Springs have the diversity of resources and recreational opportunities to qualify as a state park.

Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management

River Sink Spring and Blue Springs are moderate-need tracts, requiring more than basic resource management and protection. Gainer Springs is a high-need management area including public recreational use and development compatible with resource management. FFS would manage the Santa Fe Spring parcel for Operation Outdoor Freedom Hunts.

Management Implementation, Public Access, Site Security and Protection of Infrastructure

Jackson Blue Springs is now being used by the public and Jackson County has no plans to curtail activities. The county would continue to open the swimming area in season and maintain year-round access for boating, fishing and nature appreciation. The smaller second spring may need restrictions to ensure public safety and preservation of the limestone bluffs. A lifeguard will be on duty while the swimming area is open. Access will be controlled primarily by fences. River Sink Spring would immediately fall under the National Forests in Florida's Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). Within the first few years after acquisition, management activities would focus on site security, resource inventory, removal of existing trash and any necessary prescribed fire management. In the first year after Gainer Springs is acquired, DRP will concentrate on site security, natural and cultural resource protection, and the development of a plan for long-term public use and resource management.





Revenue-generating Potential

The Blue Springs swimming area generated \$21,946 in revenue in fiscal year 1992-93 and \$13,045 in fiscal year 1993-94. DRP expects Gainer Springs to generate no significant revenue initially. The amount of any revenue generated would depend on the nature and extent of public use and facilities. As facilities are developed, River Sink Spring may become a national recreational fee area. Fees collected from the use of this area would be activities of the federal government. It is estimated that the area will receive more than 5,000 visits annually once it is developed.

Cooperators in Management Activities

Jackson County expects FWC to cooperate in managing wildlife on the Jackson Blue Springs project area. Other appropriate agencies may wish to become involved in the project. As funds become available and subject to public approval, USFS may enter into a cooperative agreement to manage the property.



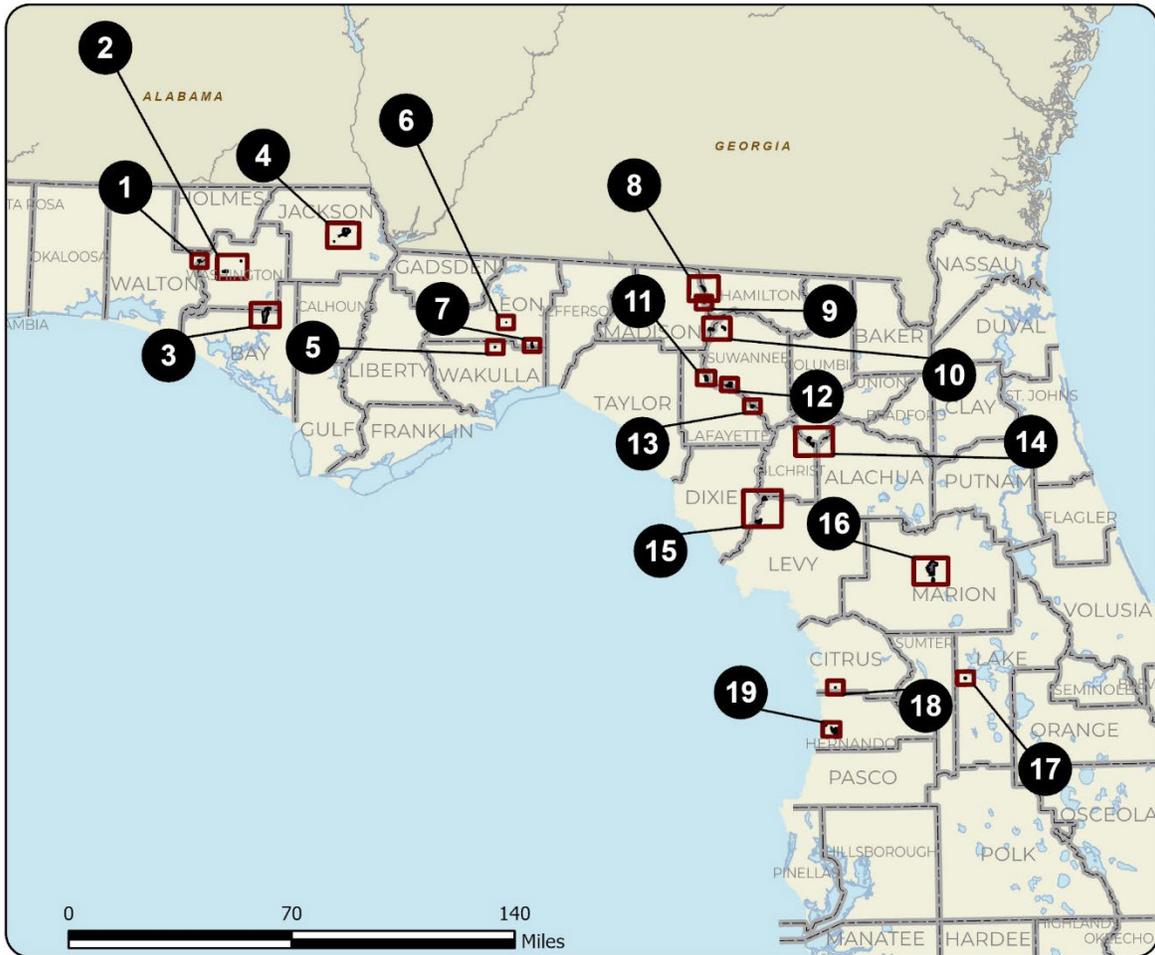


Management Cost Summary

DRP	Startup	Recurring	Startup	Recurring
Source of Funds	Federal	Federal	CARL	CARL
Salary	\$0	\$5,000	\$22,167	\$22,167
OPS	\$0	\$0	\$7,280	\$7,280
Expense	\$3,000	\$5,000	\$5,424	\$5,424
OCO	\$0	\$0	\$6,978	\$6,978
FCO	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	\$3,000	\$10,000	\$41,849	\$41,849

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted



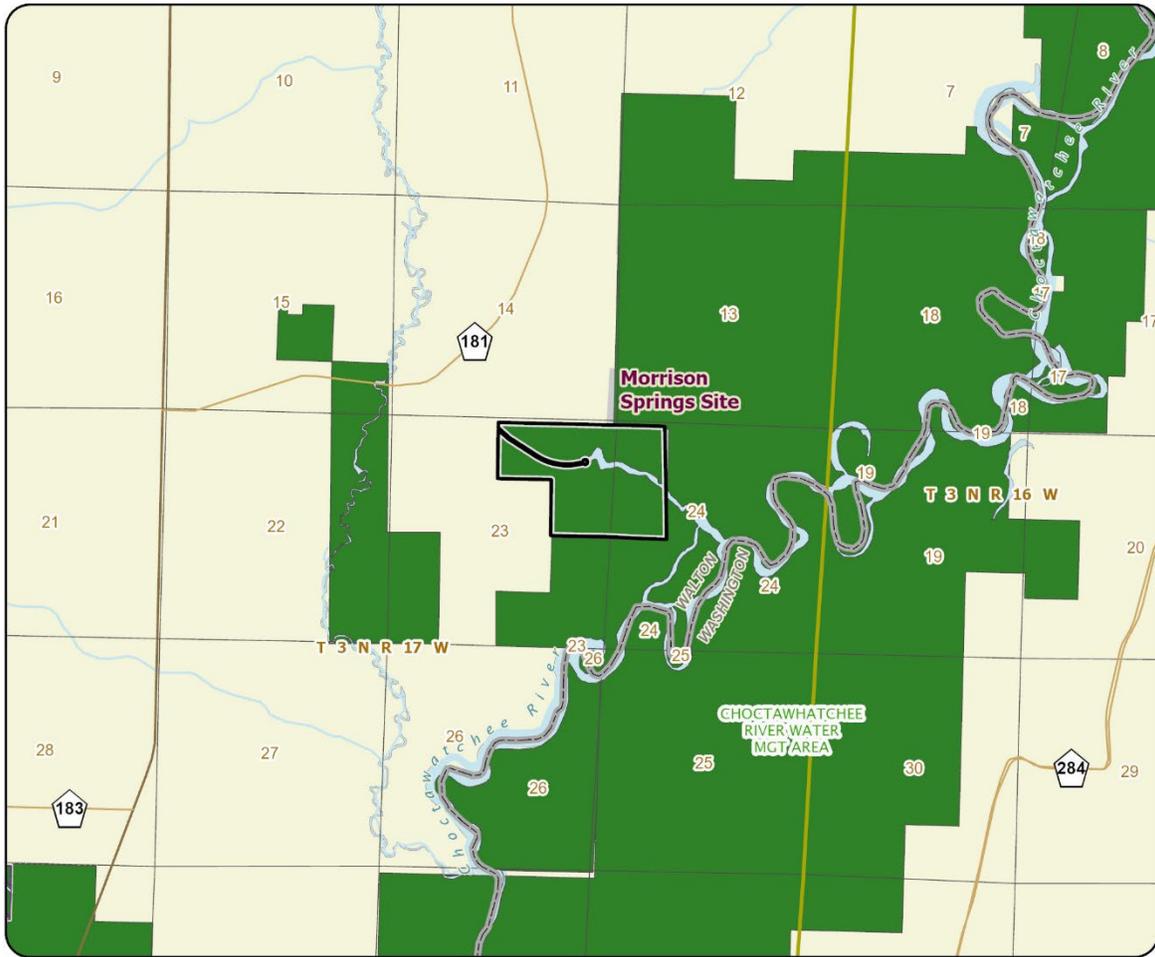


FLORIDA'S FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS: OVERVIEW

BAY, CITRUS, COLUMBIA, GILCHRIST, HAMILTON, HERNANDO, JACKSON, LAFAYETTE, LAKE, LEON, LEVY, MADISON, MARION, SUWANNEE, WAKULLA, WALTON, AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES

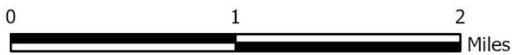
- Map 1 Morrison Springs Site
- Map 2 Brunson Landing Tract Site
- Map 2 Cypress Spring Site
- Map 3 Gainer Springs Site
- Map 4 Jackson Blue Springs Site
- Map 5 River Sink Spring Site
- Map 6 Church Sink Site
- Map 7 St. Marks Springs Site
- Map 8 Hardee Spring Site
- Map 9 Madison Blue Springs Site
- Map 10 Damascus Peanut Tract Site
- Map 10 Falmouth Spring Site
- Map 11 Lafayette Blue Springs Site
- Map 12 Suwannee Springs Site
- Map 13 Troy Spring Site
- Map 14 Blue Springs Park Site
- Map 14 Santa Fe Springs Site
- Map 14 Sorrell Spring Site
- Map 15 Fanning Springs Site
- Map 15 Manatee Springs Site
- Map 16 Silver Springs Site
- Map 17 Bugg Spring Site
- Map 18 Springs Coast Research Station Site
- Map 19 Mud Spring Site
- Map 19 Weekiwachee Springs Site

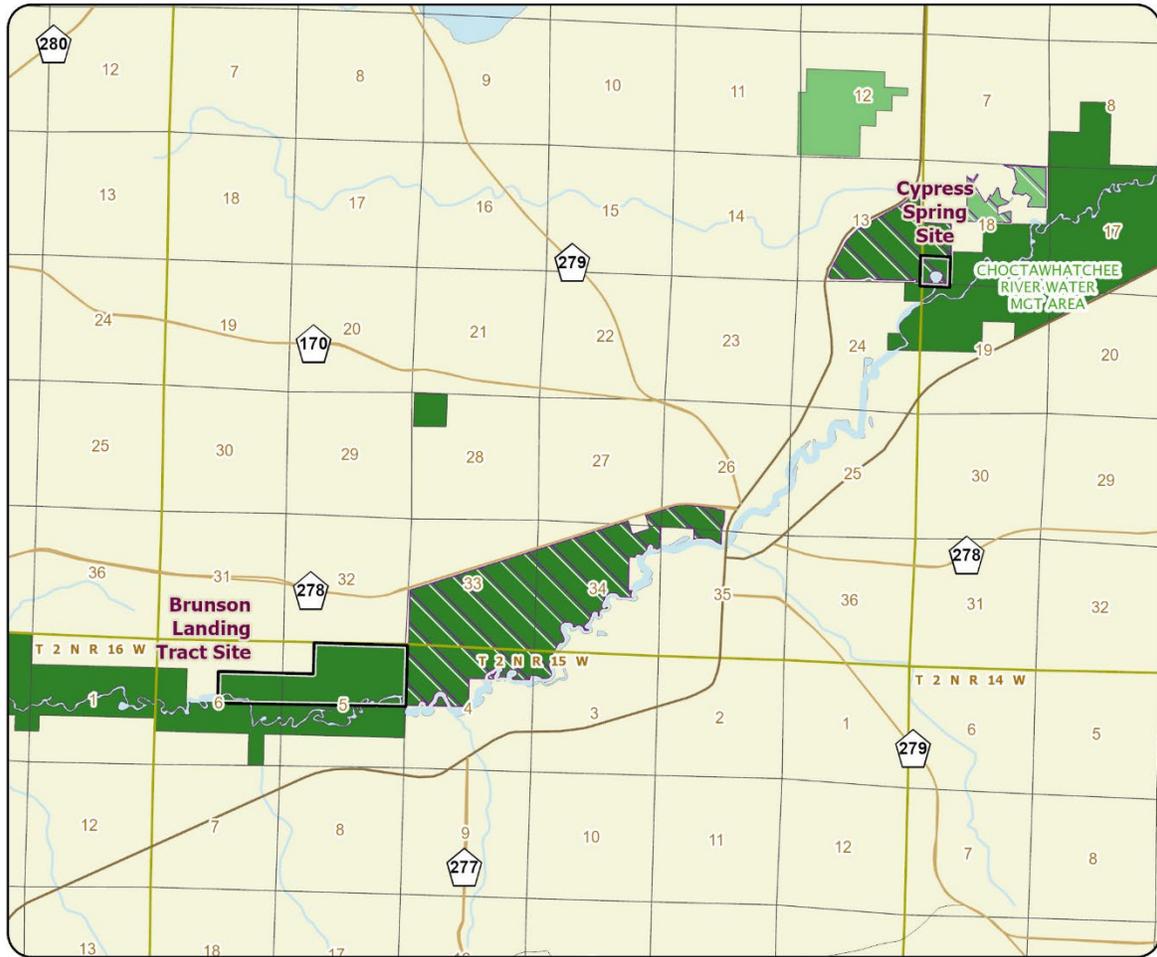




FLORIDA'S FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS: MAP 1

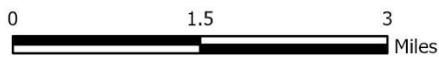
WALTON COUNTY

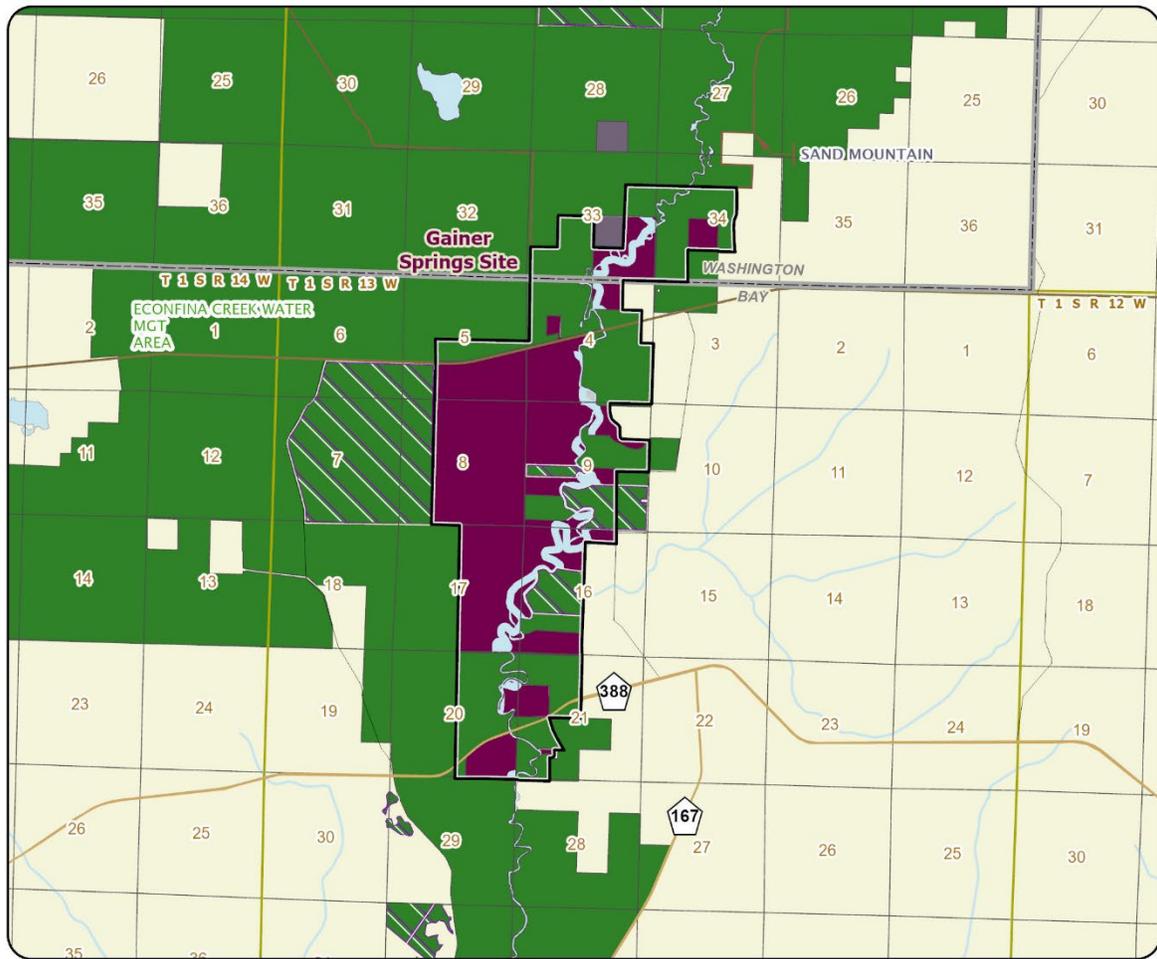




FLORIDA'S FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS: MAP 2

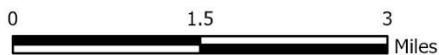
WASHINGTON COUNTY

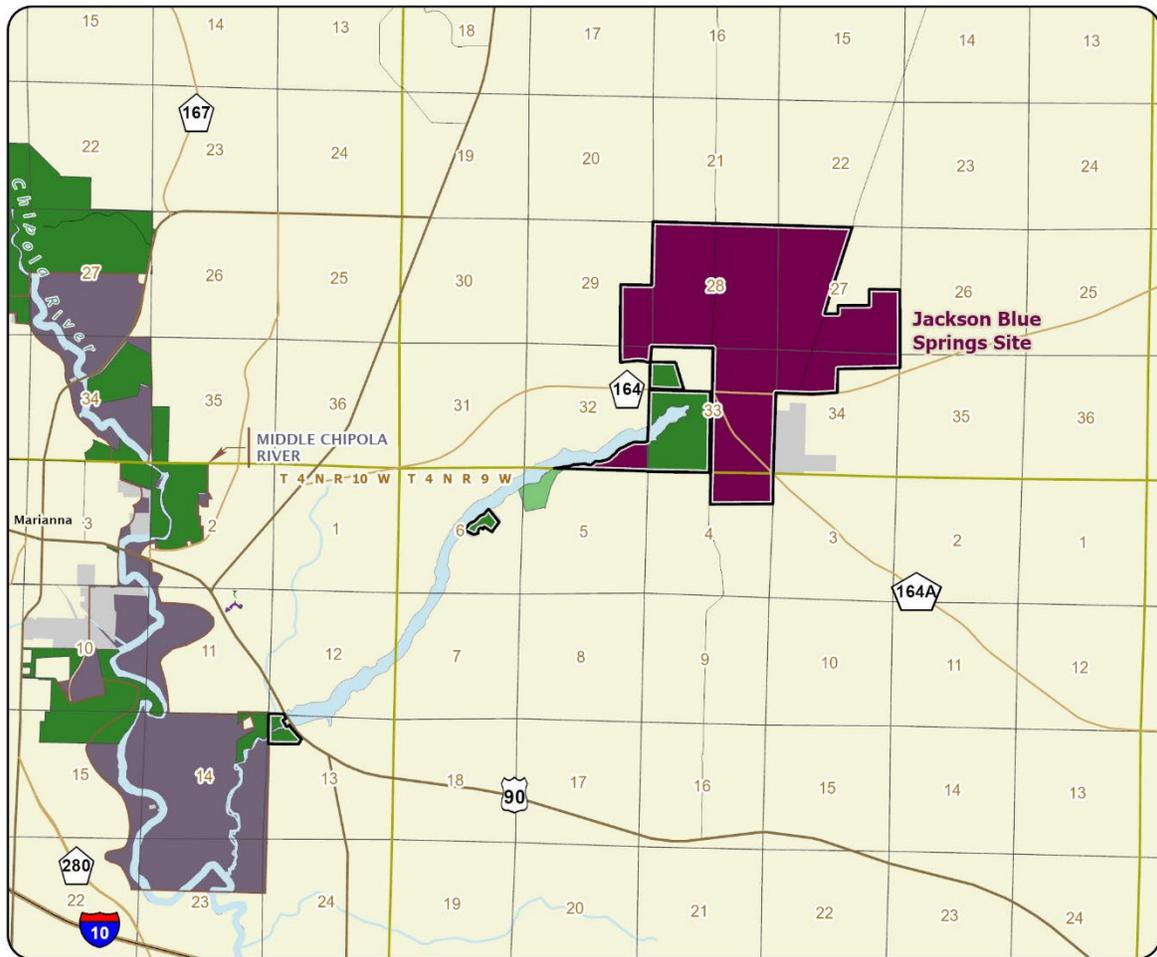




FLORIDA'S FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS: MAP 3

BAY AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES

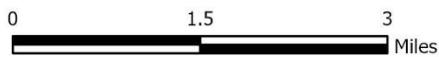


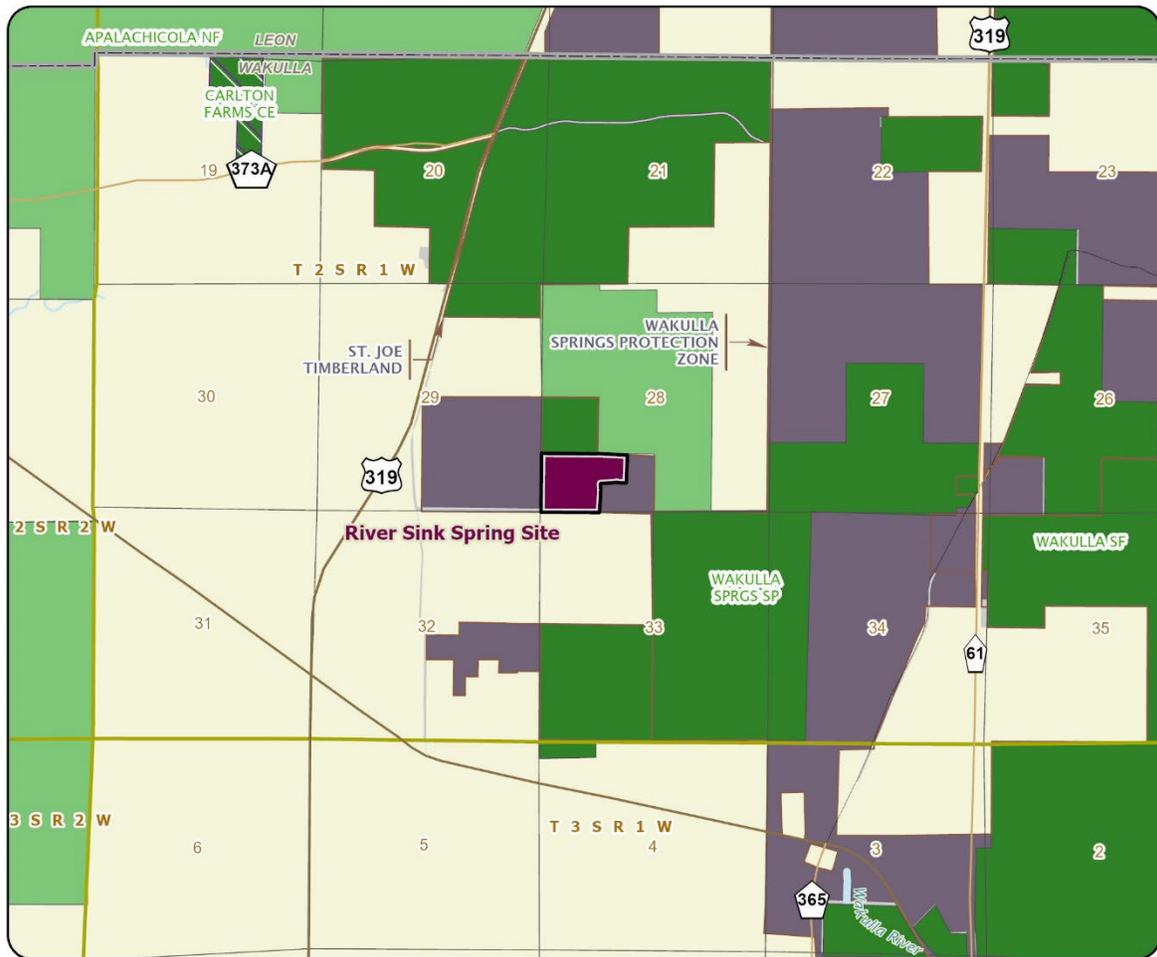


FLORIDA'S FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS: MAP 4

JACKSON 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

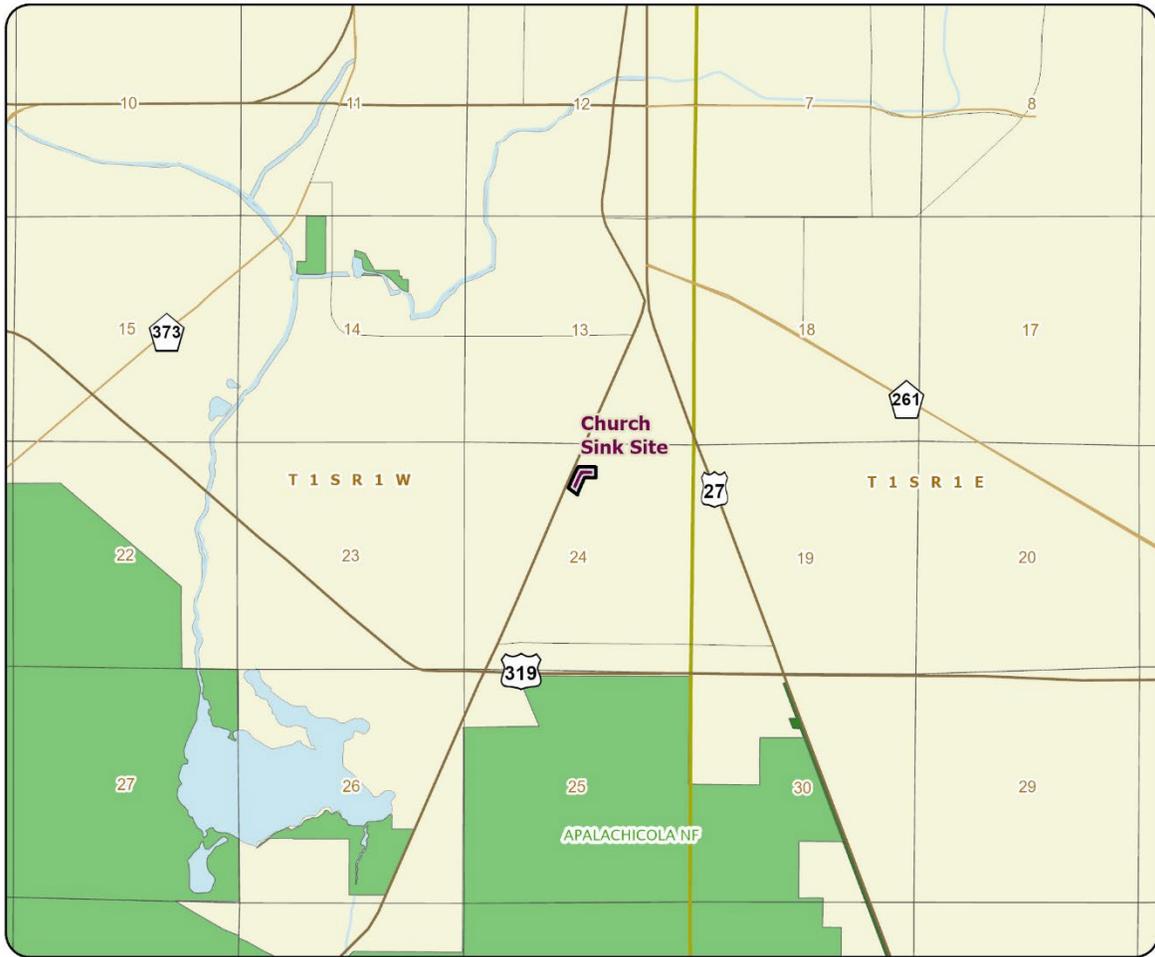




FLORIDA'S FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS: MAP 5

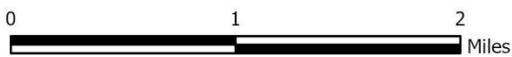
WAKULLA COUNTY





FLORIDA'S FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS: MAP 6

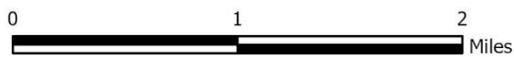
LEON COUNTY

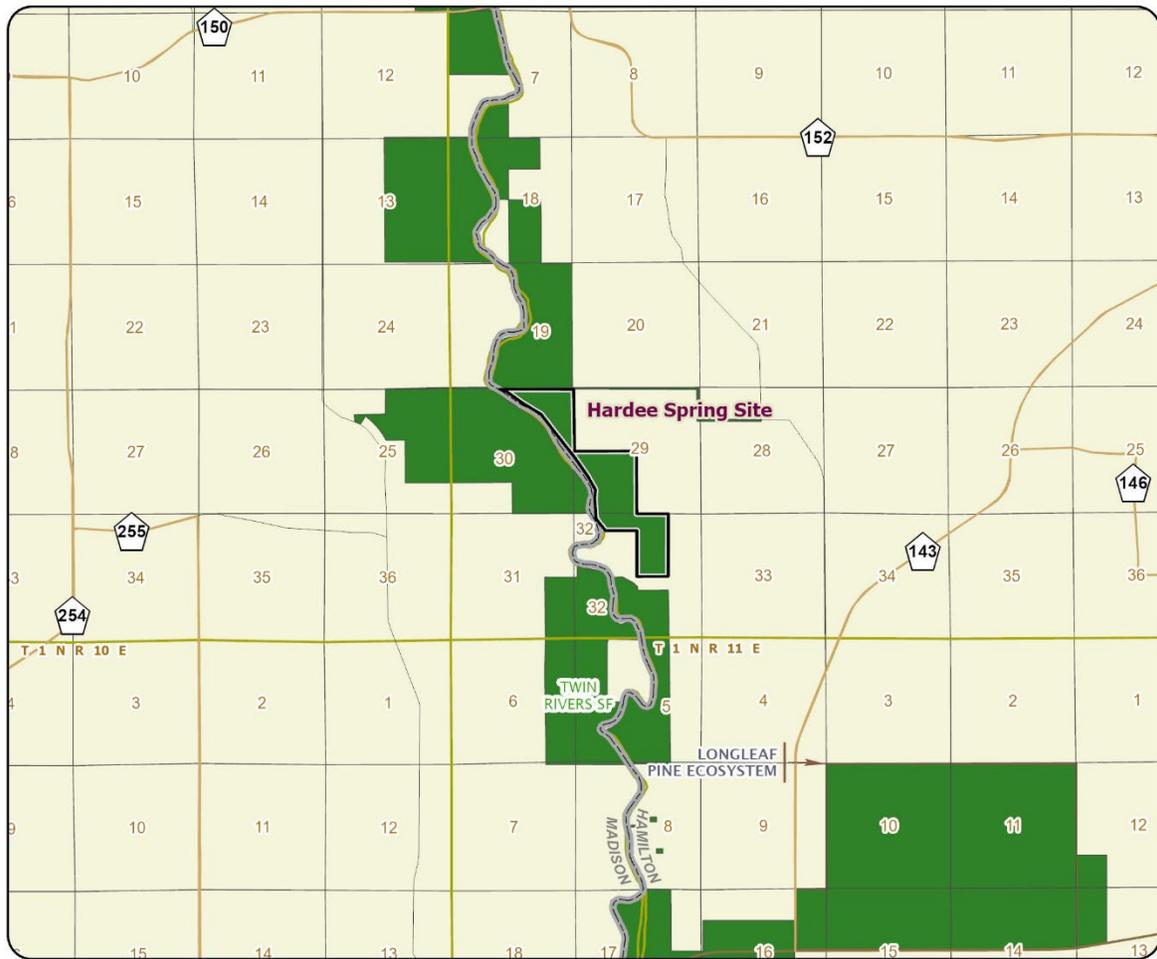




FLORIDA'S FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS: MAP 7

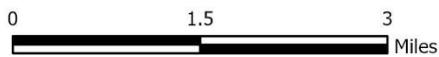
LEON COUNTY

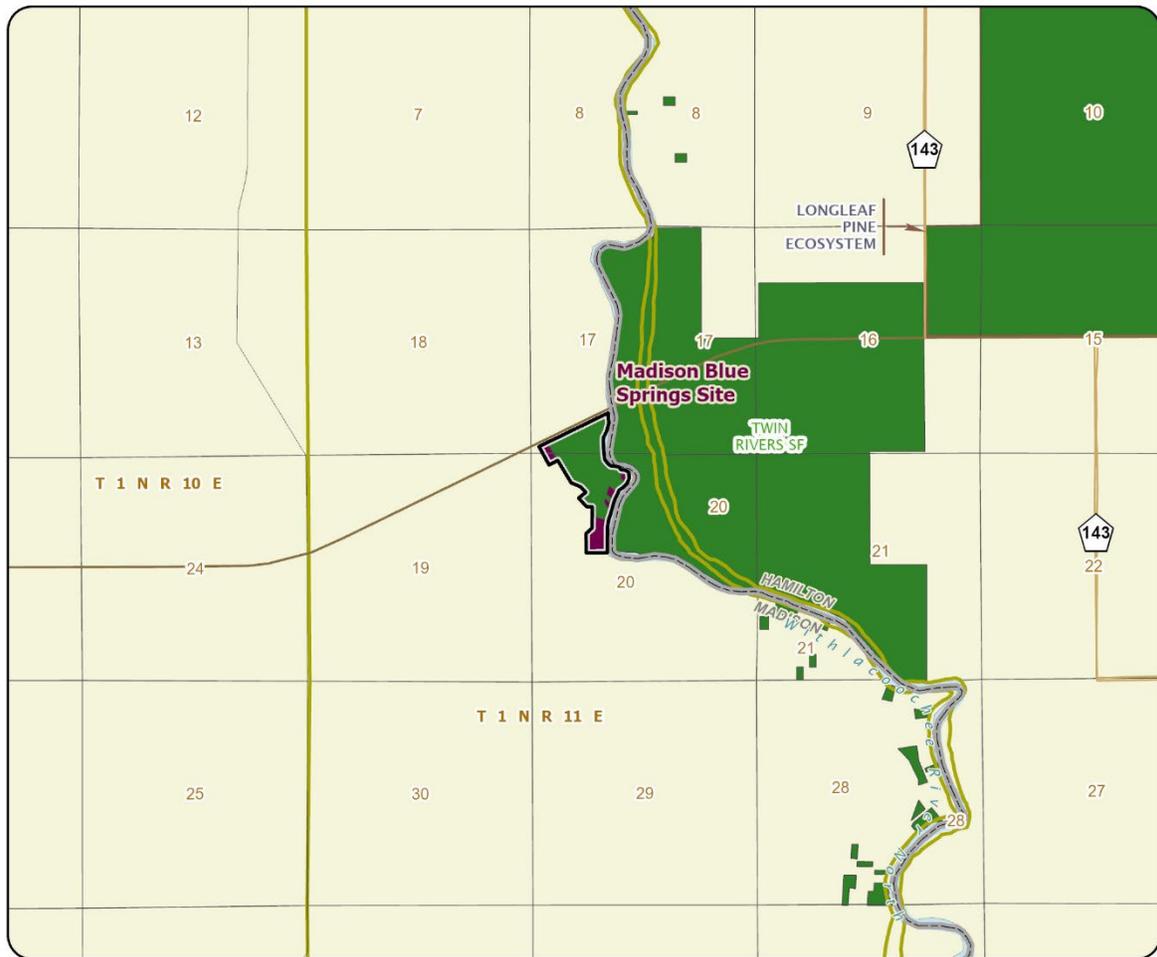




FLORIDA'S FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS: MAP 8

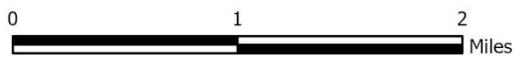
HAMILTON COUNTY

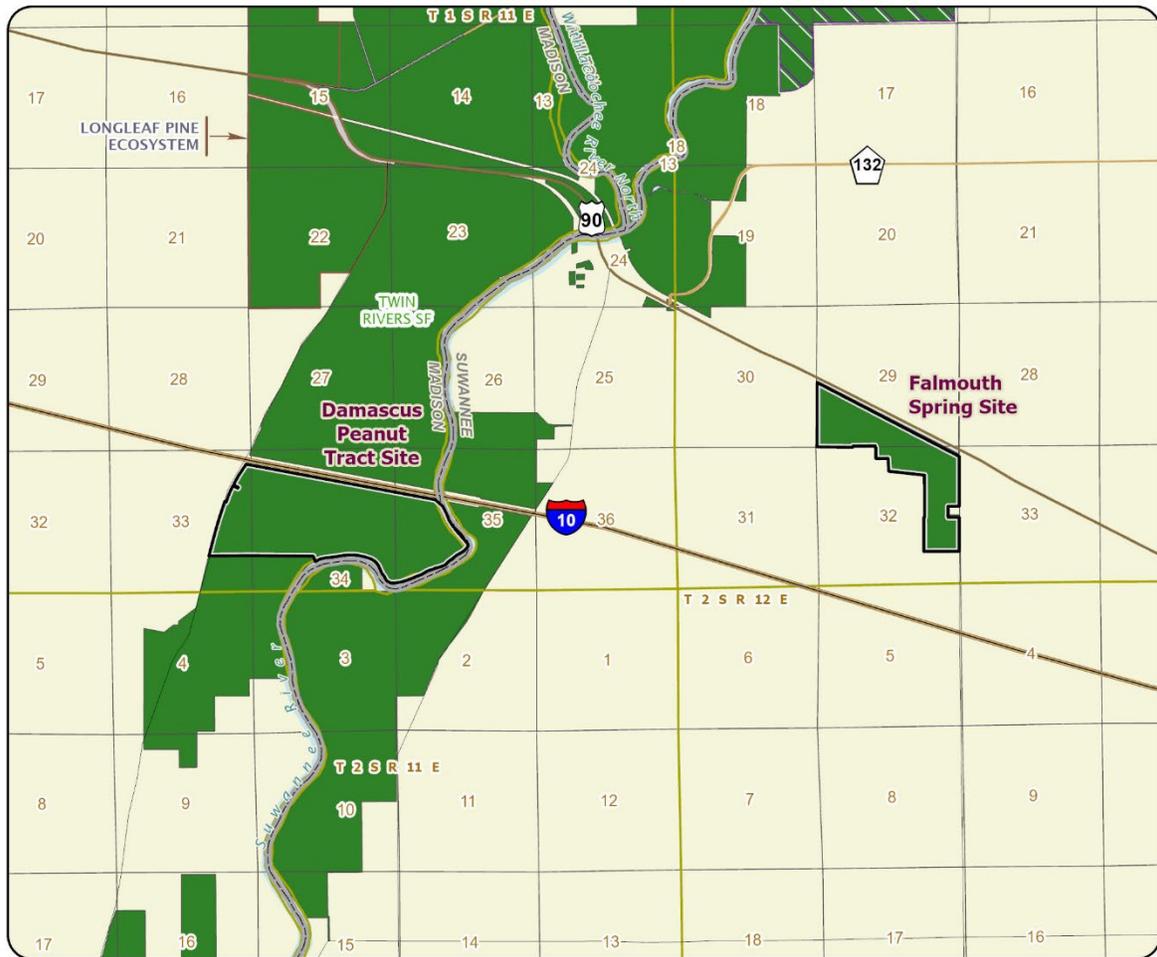




FLORIDA'S FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS: MAP 9

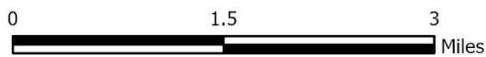
MADISON COUNTY

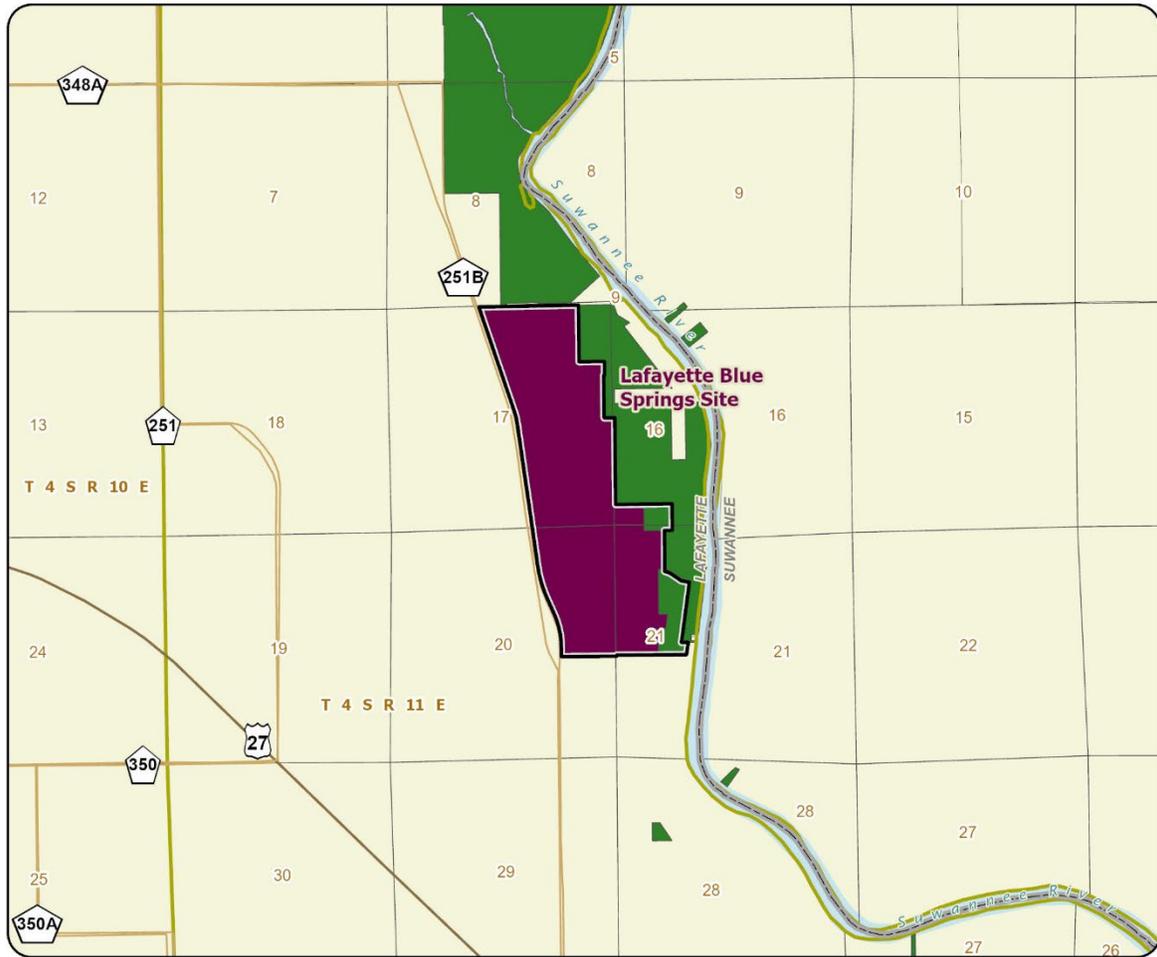




FLORIDA'S FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS: MAP 10

MADISON AND SUWANNEE COUNTIES

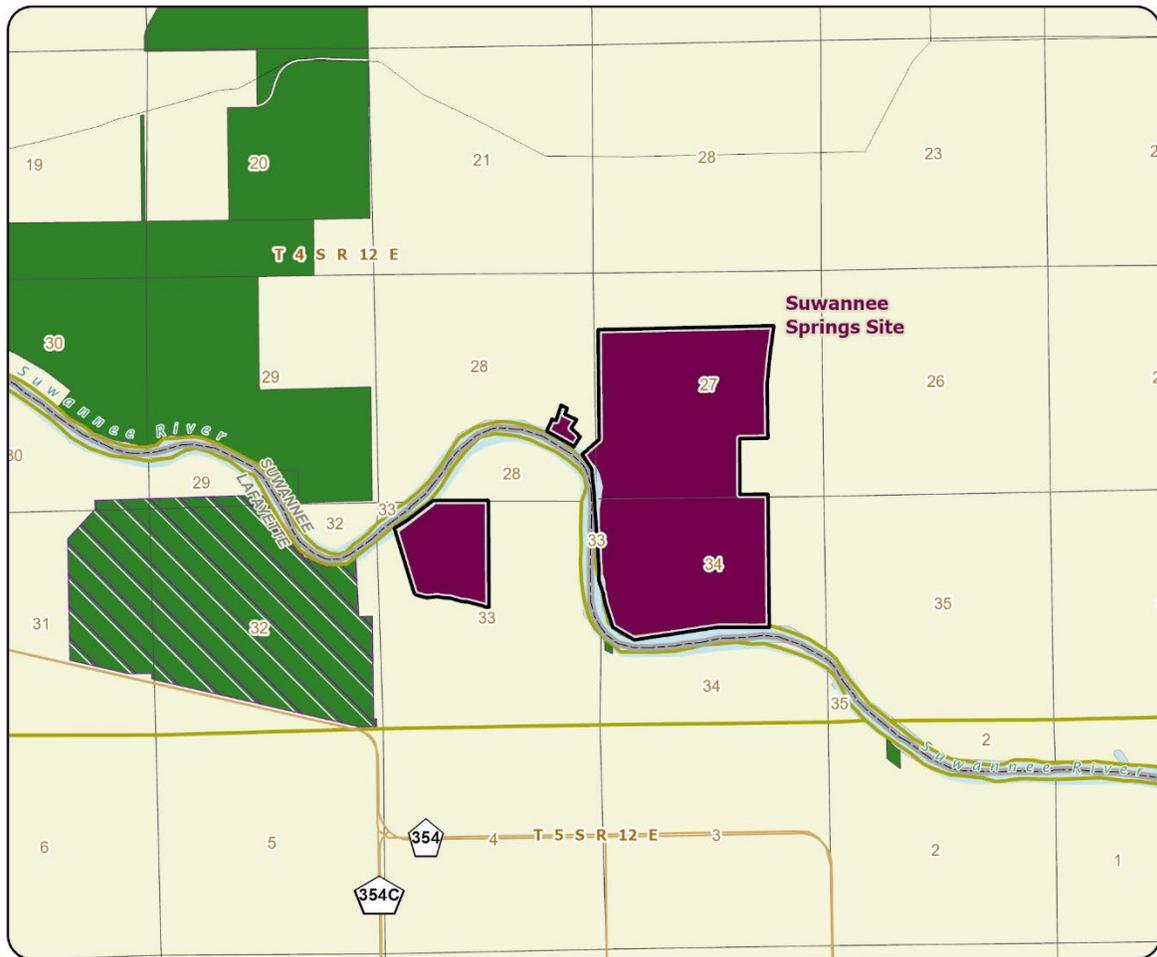




FLORIDA'S FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS: MAP 11

LAFAYETTE COUNTY

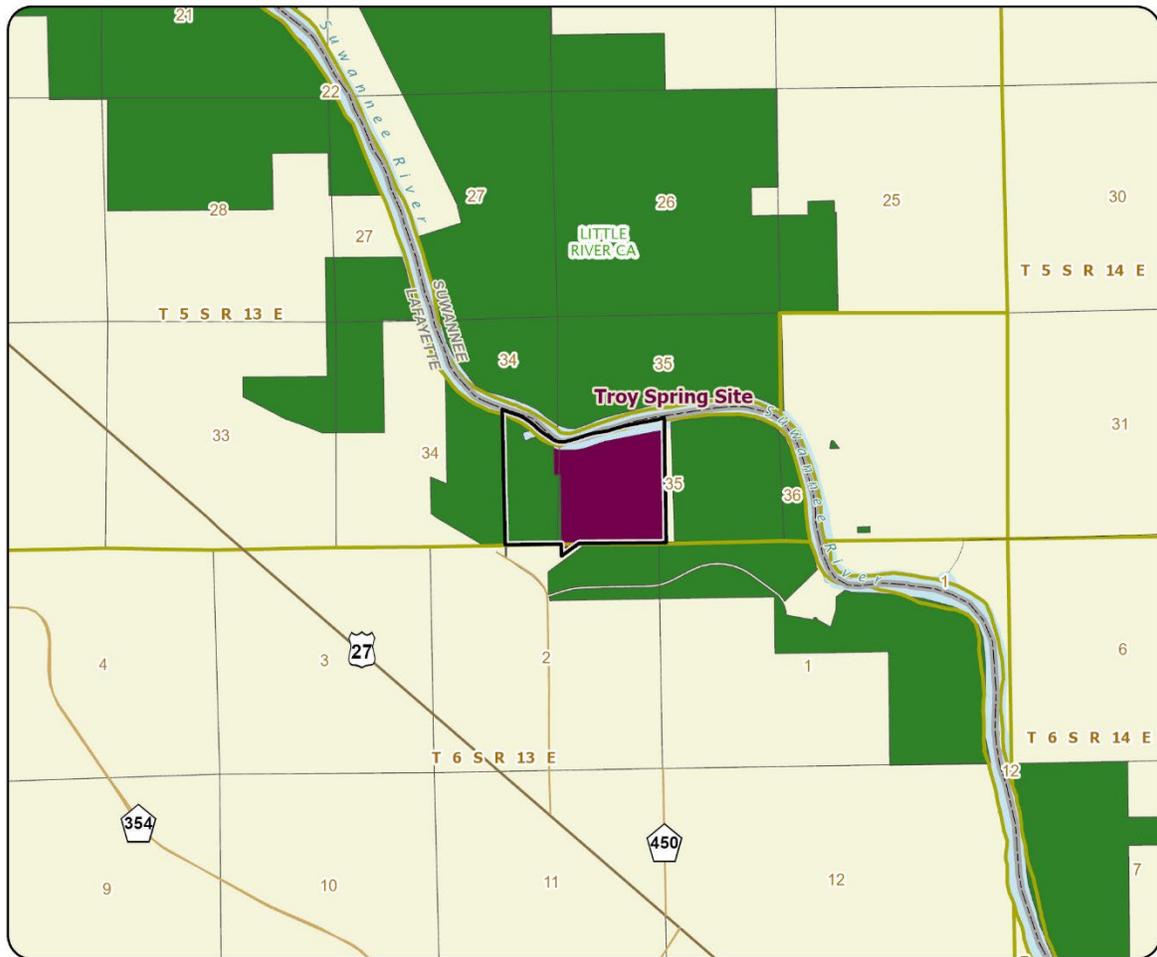




FLORIDA'S FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS: MAP 12

LAFAYETTE AND SUWANNEE COUNTIES

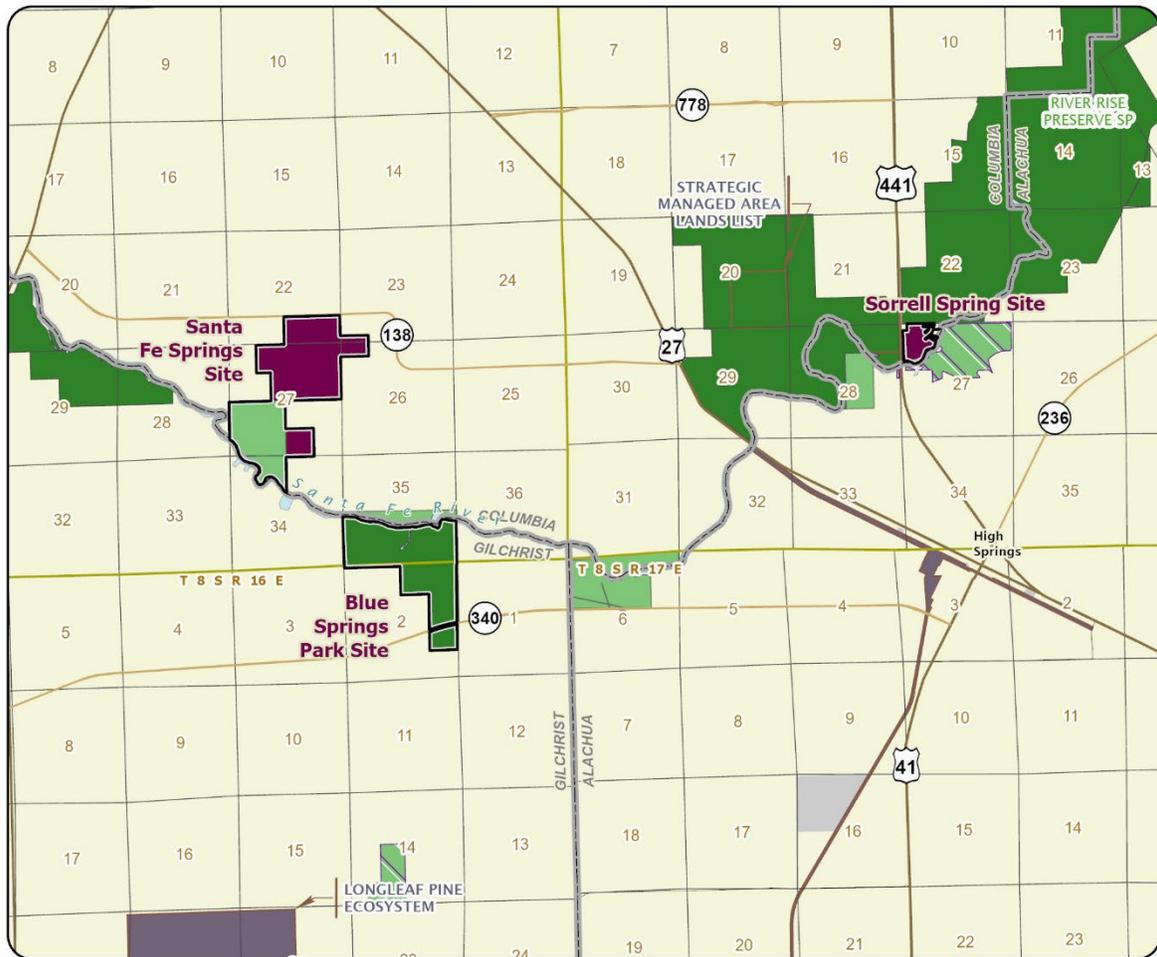




FLORIDA'S FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS: MAP 13

LAFAYETTE COUNTY

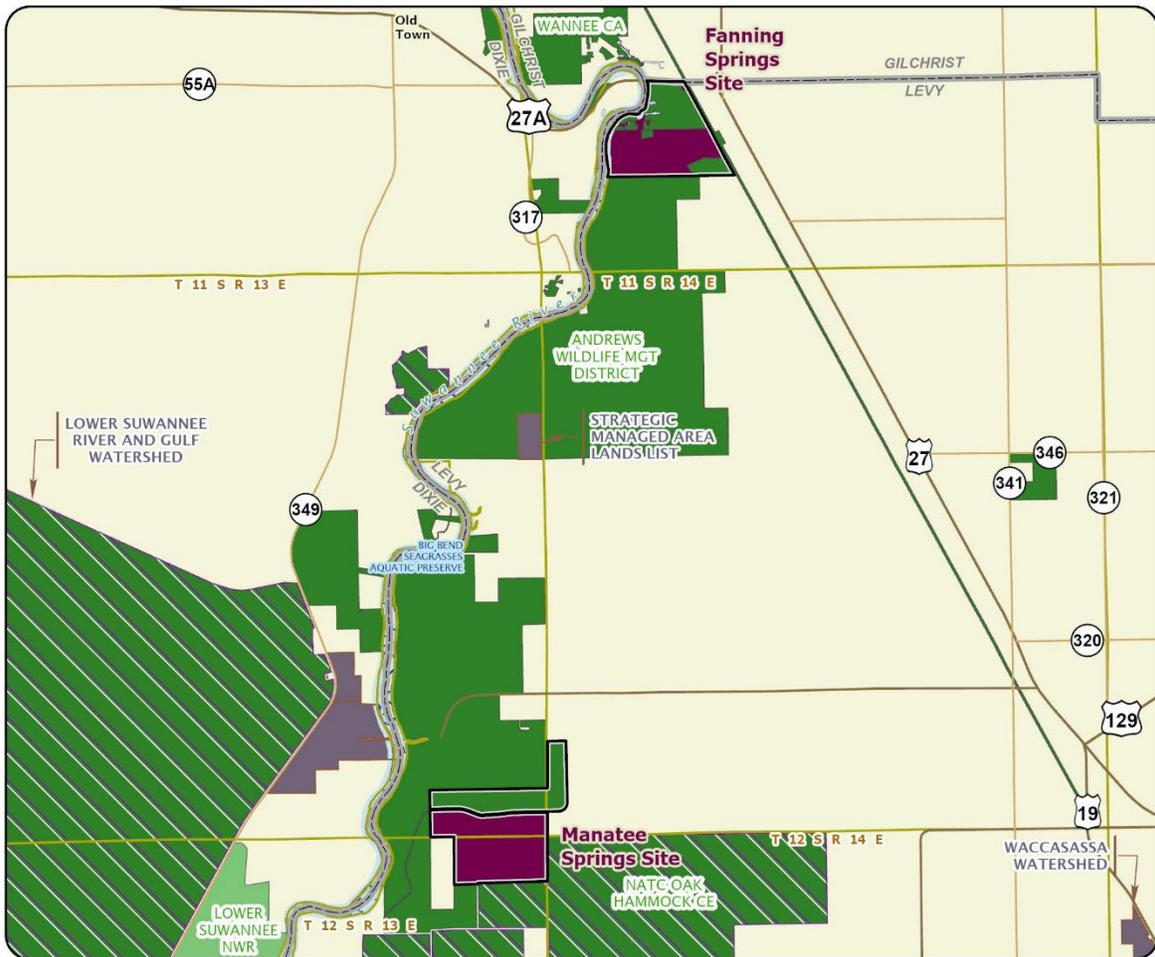




FLORIDA'S FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS: MAP 14

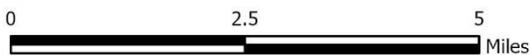
COLUMBIA AND GILCHRIST COUNTIES

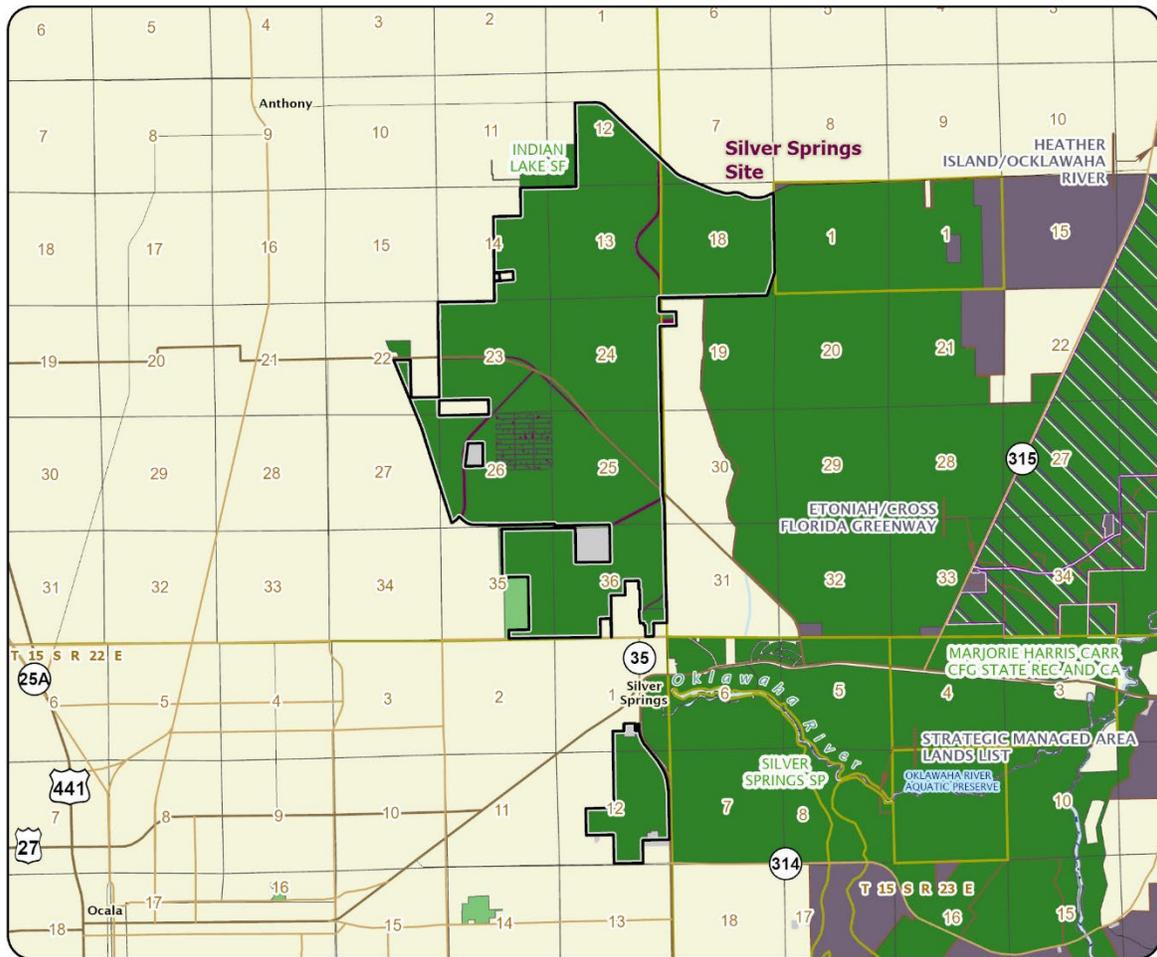




FLORIDA'S FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS: MAP 15

LEVY COUNTY

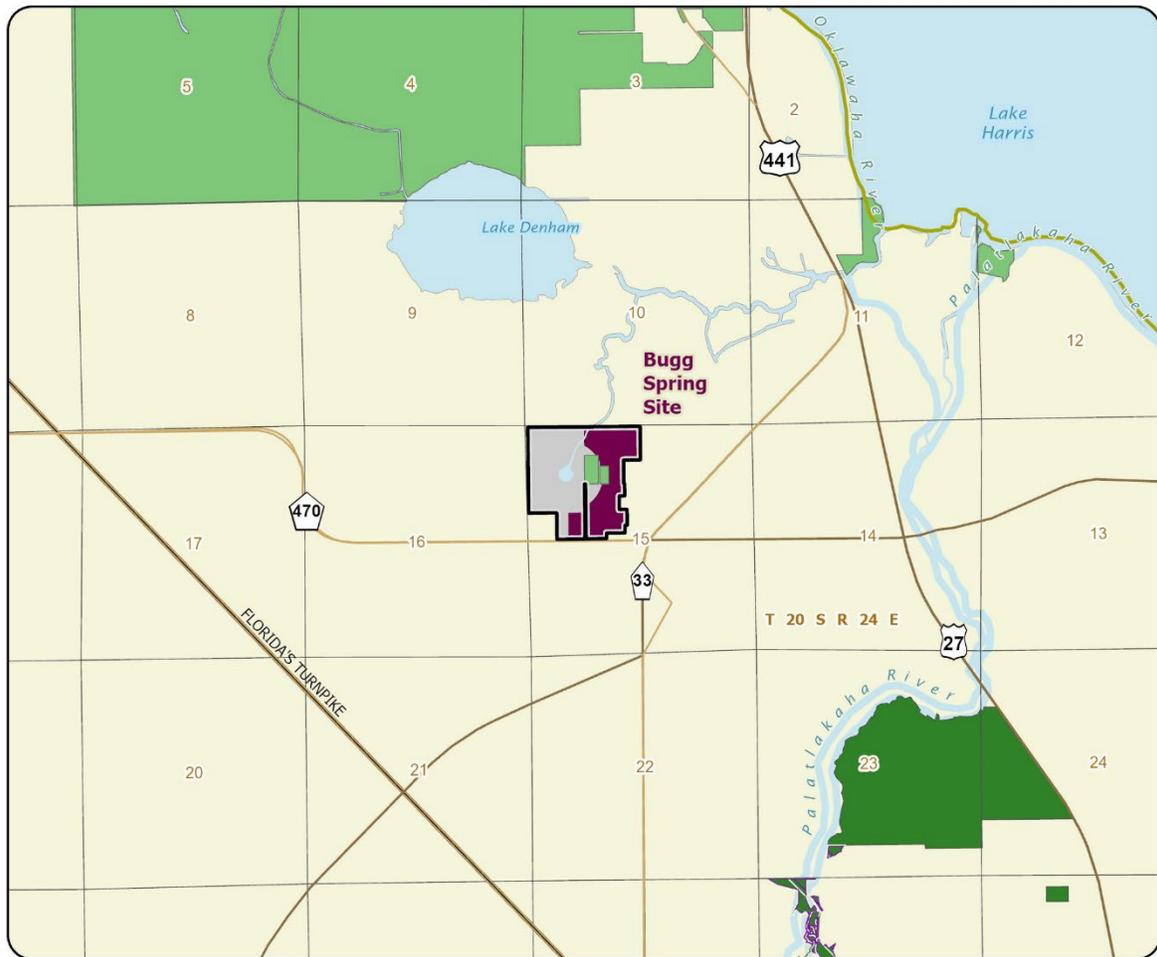




FLORIDA'S FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS: MAP 16

MARION COUNTY



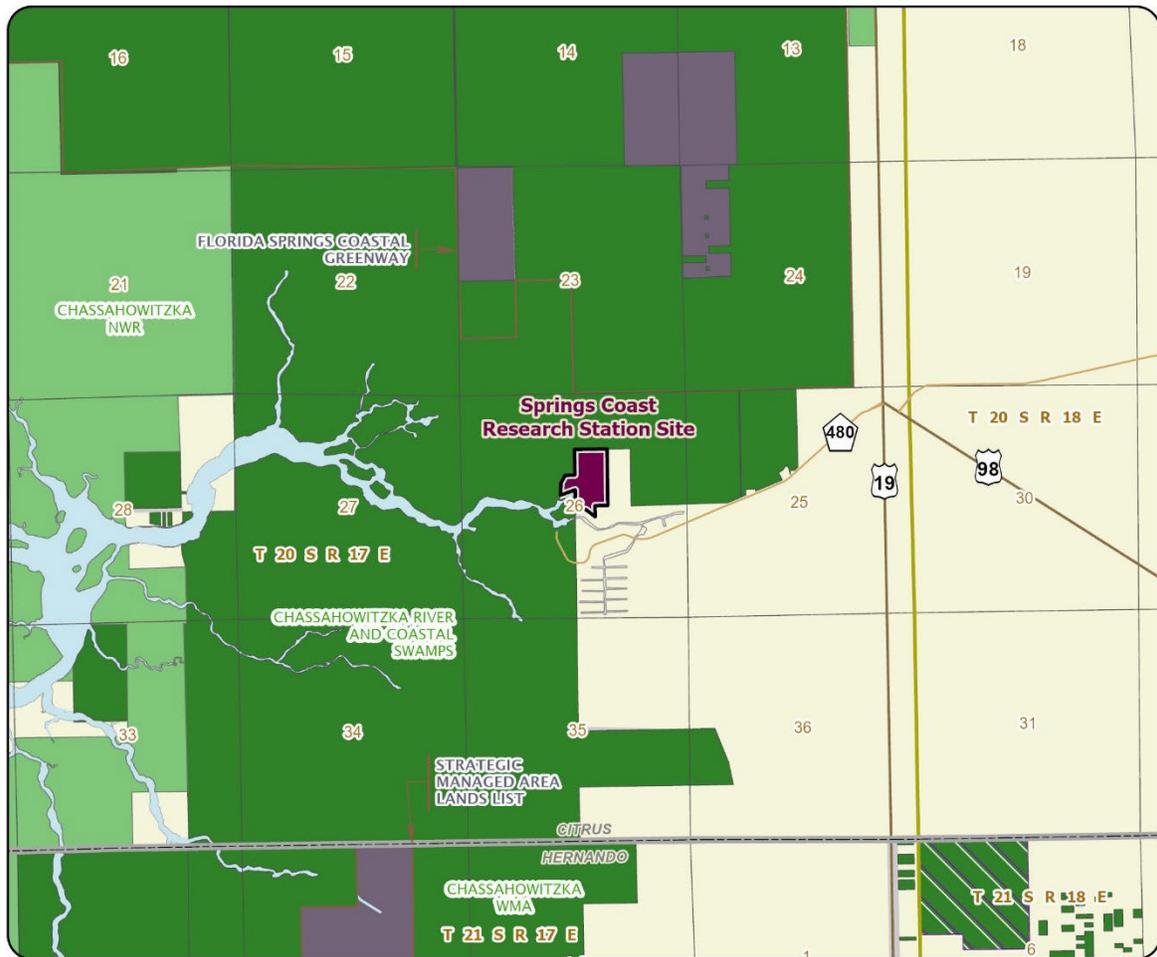


FLORIDA'S FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS: MAP 17

LAKE COUNTY

-  Florida Forever Project Boundary
-  Essential Parcels Remaining
-  State Conservation Lands
-  Other Conservation Lands
-  Other Public Lands
-  Less-Than-Fee Acquisition

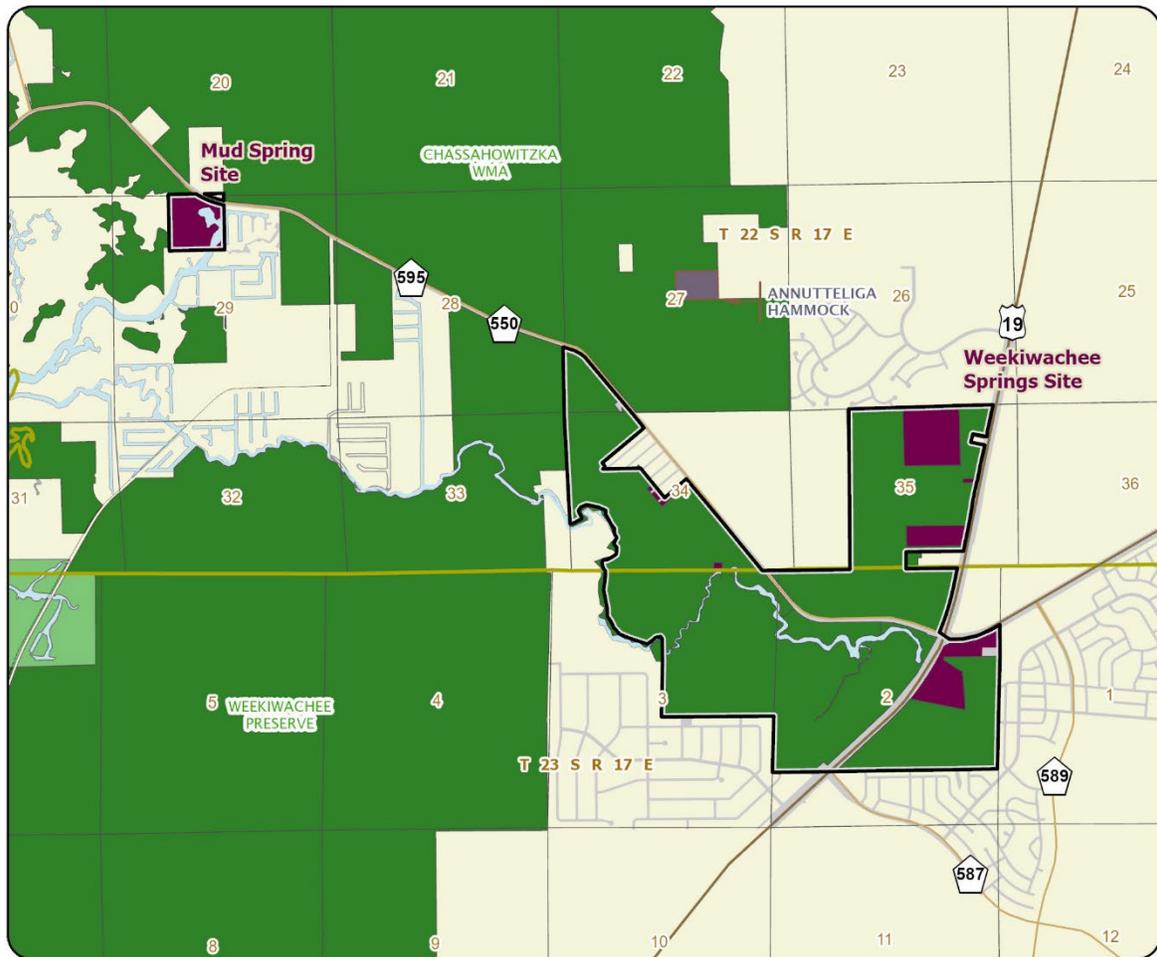




FLORIDA'S FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS: MAP 18

CITRUS COUNTY





FLORIDA'S FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS: MAP 19

HERNANDO COUNTY

