

# Indian River Lagoon Blueway

Partnerships and Regional Incentives

Brevard, Indian River, Martin, St. Lucie and Volusia Counties

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	<i>1998</i>
<i>Project Acres</i>	<i>28,060</i>
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	<i>11,172</i>
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	<i>16,888</i>
<i>2024 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	<i>\$820,799,363</i>

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The Indian River Lagoon Blueway project will preserve and improve the aquatic natural communities of the Indian River Lagoon, one of the country’s most productive, diverse, and commercially and recreationally important estuaries. A third of the country’s manatee population lives in the Indian River; the area is also important for many oceanic fishes, migratory birds and estuarine fishes. Additionally, public acquisition would provide natural resource-based recreation in a developing area of Florida.

## General Description

The project is in five counties, includes 36 separate areas (combined into 20 sites), and lies within the jurisdiction of two water management districts. It spans approximately 150 miles along the east and west sides of the Indian River Lagoon. Marine tidal marsh and maritime hammock, largely in good condition, cover roughly 60 percent of the project; many of the marshes have been diked for mosquito control and require reconnection to the lagoon. Mangrove swamps, scrub and flatwoods cover small portions of the proposal areas. A large part of the country’s manatee population lives in the Indian River, and the area is important for many migratory birds as well as for oceanic and estuarine fishes. The Indian River Lagoon is a state aquatic preserve and classified as an Outstanding Florida Water. It is also a Surface Water Improvement and Management priority water body and an Estuary of National Significance. The commercial and recreational fisheries (based on estuarine-dependent species) in the Indian River are some of Florida’s most important—over 100,000 saltwater recreational anglers are registered in the proposal area.





FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<b><u>FNAI Elements</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>
Florida manatee	G2G3T2/S2S3
Florida scrub-jay	G1G2/S1S2
Eastern indigo snake	G3/S2?
Green sea turtle	G3/S2S3
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Loggerhead sea turtle	G2G4/S3
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
<i>fragrant prickly apple</i>	G1/S1
<i>Lakela's balm</i>	G1T1/S1
Atlantic salt marsh snake	G4T1Q/S1
<i>Atlantic Coast Florida lantana</i>	G2T1T2/S1S2
<i>Curtiss's hoary-pea</i>	G2/S2

**Public Use**

Parcels in the project fall within or are adjacent to five aquatic preserves: Mosquito Lagoon, Banana River, Indian River—Malabar to Vero Beach, Indian River—Vero Beach to Ft. Pierce, and Jensen Beach to Jupiter Inlet. It will be managed as a buffer to the aquatic preserves.

**Acquisition Planning**

**1963**

On August 28, 1963, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge (131,704 acres) was established, of which 1,210 acres would be in the project boundary when it was created.

**1970**

On June 26, 1970, the state dedicated Ulumay Wildlife Sanctuary (884.2 acres) to Brevard County.

**1992**

In February 1992, Brevard County acquired the original Kabboord Sanctuary (449 acres) property, of which approximately 78 acres would be in the project boundary when it was created.

**1996**

In December 1996, the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) and Brevard County acquire the original parcels of Pine Island Conservation Area (836.16 acres).

**1997**

In October 1997, Brevard County acquired the Washburn Cove Sanctuary (39 acres).

On December 12, 1997, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council added the Indian River Lagoon Blueway project to the 1998 Conservation and Recreational Lands Priority List. This fee-simple acquisition, sponsored by multiple sponsors, consisted of approximately 5,136 acres, 460 owners and had a 1996 taxable value of \$24,519,173.





### **1998**

On November 10, 1998, SJRWMD acquired a 98.85-acre mitigation parcel in Pine Island Conservation Area.

### **1999**

In June 1999, Brevard County acquired the BRB Enterprise property (53 acres) in Kabboord Sanctuary, of which approximately 37 acres are in the project boundary.

On June 17, 1999, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council approved a fee-simple, 42-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by Brevard County, consisted of multiple owners and had a 1998 taxable value of \$865,400.

In November 1999, Brevard County acquired a 11.36-acre mitigation parcel in the Pine Island Conservation Area.

On December 9, 1999, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council approved combining the North Indian River Lagoon project with the existing Indian River Lagoon Blueway project. The added acreage brought the total project area to approximately 25,345 acres.

### **2000**

On December 19, 2000, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council approved a fee-simple, 186-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by multiple sponsors, consisted of multiple owners and had a 1999 taxable value of \$4,205,800. The addition was broken down as follows: (1) Brevard County Snagg Point, sponsored by The Nature Conservancy (TNC), consisted of 125 acres with a taxable value of \$1,246,520. SJRWMD acquired 14.63 acres in 2005; (2) Martin County Bon Air Beach, sponsored by the Town of Jupiter Island, consisted of 43 acres with a taxable value of \$1,1161,000; and (3) St. Lucie County Hobe Sound Addition, sponsored by St. Lucie County, consisted of 18 acres with a taxable value of \$1,798,280.

### **2001**

In March 2001, Indian River County acquired approximately 100 acres to create the Oyster Bar Salt Marsh.

On April 16, 2001, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) established Groups A and B and moved this project to Group B of the 2001 Florida Forever Priority List.

### **2002**

On December 5, 2002, ARC moved this project to Group A of the 2003 Florida Forever Priority List. On August 15, 2003, ARC approved a fee-simple, 15-acre addition (Old Oak Lodge Preserve) to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the Florida Institute of Technology, Department of Marine and Environmental Systems, consisted of one owner, Indian River No. 1 Developer and had a 2002 taxable value of \$685,170.

### **2003**

On August 15, 2003, ARC approved the addition of Old Oak Lodge Preserve (14.8 acres) to the project.





## 2005

On February 11, 2005, ARC approved a fee-simple, 297-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by TNC, consisted of four owners and had a 2004 taxable value of \$1,137,380.

On July 20, 2005, Martin County acquired the Jensen Beach Impoundment (93 acres).

## 2007

On February 16, 2007, ARC approved a fee-simple, 194-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the Brevard County Environmentally Endangered Lands Program (EEL), consisted of nine ownerships, 10 parcels and had a taxable value of \$984,310. Brevard County will manage these parcels, which are considered essential to the project.

On April 13, 2007, ARC approved a fee-simple, 296-acre addition, known as Harbor Branch, to the project boundary. It was sponsored by St. Lucie County, consisted of three landowners, 12 parcels and had a taxable value of \$16,248,257. The parcels were designated as essential and will be managed by the St. Lucie County Mosquito Control District.

In June 2007, Brevard County acquired Indian River Sanctuary (43 acres), of which 5.7 acres are within the project boundary.

On August 16, 2007, ARC approved a fee-simple, 47-acre addition (Pelican Island Addition Site) to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the landowner, Torwest, Inc., and the Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge and consisted of one parcel with a 2006 taxable value of \$5,816,550. The Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge is the recommended manager of this essential parcel. Approximately half an acre of the parcel overlaps the Archie Carr Sea Turtle Refuge Florida Forever project site in Indian River County.

## 2008

On July 24, 2008, Brevard County acquired the Boyd (148 acres) and Dichristopher (147 acres) parcels to expand Ulumay Wildlife Sanctuary. The Ulumay Wildlife Sanctuary totals 1,179.2 acres, of which approximately 532.89 acres are within the project boundary.

On July 24, 2008, Volusia County established the Fisherman's Cove (1 acre) conservation easement.

In August 2008, 41.88 acres of the Kaufman/Young ownership were purchased for \$1,969,999 (\$1,313,333 from the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Florida Forever funds and \$656,666 from SJRWMD). DEP's Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP) will manage this addition.

On December 12, 2008, ARC voted to extend the boundary with a fee-simple 230-acre addition in St. Lucie County, with a tax-assessed value of \$33,756,700. This is the Indian River Lagoon Blueway Harbor Branch, Phase II, part of the Harbor Branch Oceanographic campus. The proposal, which was submitted as a stand-alone project, was designated as essential and immediately added to the project boundary.

## 2009

In November 2009, the Indian River Land Trust acquired a 1.6-acre parcel in Toni Robinson Waterfront Trail.





In December 2009, the Indian River Land Trust acquired a 6.7-acre parcel in Toni Robinson Waterfront Trail.

**2010**

On March 10, 2010, two parcels - about 384 acres (136 acres by DEP's Division of State Lands and 248 acres by the former Department of Community Affairs, now Department of Economic Opportunity) - were purchased from Harbor Branch for \$24,040,488 (funding source from FF-HB-Other). These parcels are to be managed by Florida Atlantic University.

In August 2010, the Indian River Land Trust acquired Quay Dock Kayak Launch (4 acres), of which approximately 2.3 acres are within the project boundary.

**2011**

In September 2011, the Indian River Land Trust acquired the initial tracts of Coastal Oaks Preserve (134.75 acres).

In November 2011, the Indian River Land Trust acquired Winter Beach Salt Marsh (50.3 acres), of which approximately 47.74 acres are within the project boundary.

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

**2014**

On July 24, 2014, SJRWMD surplused 31.87 acres to Indian River County; SJRWMD received a conservation easement on Toni Robinson Waterfront Trail in the exchange.

**2015**

In 2015, Indian River Land Trust acquired the Baker and Sapphire parcels (5.16 acres total) to expand the Coastal Oaks Preserve; the VBF Investment LLC parcels (25.88 acres) to expand the Oyster Bar Salt Marsh; and Reed Cut (9.5 acres, of which 4.75 acres are within the project boundary).

**2016**

On November 22, 2016, the Indian River Land Trust acquired 26.1 acres to expand the Coastal Oaks Preserve.

**2017**

In 2017, SJRWMD established a conservation easement on the Coastal Oaks Preserve.

**2018**

On October 16, 2018, the NeoVerde Basin 21 Mitigation Bank (1,321 acres) was approved, of which 1,272 acres are in the project boundary.

**2019**

On May 30, 2019, SJRWMD and DEP established a conservation easement on the NeoVerde Basin 21 Mitigation Bank.

**Coordination**

Acquisition of this project will be a coordinated effort between directly involved local governments, water management districts and the state. The five counties (Volusia, Brevard, Indian River, St. Lucie and





Martin counties) and the two water management districts (SJRWMD and South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)) have sent resolutions in support of this project. SJRWMD and Brevard County have acquired more than 3,200 acres. The District has acquired the Snag Point tract (214 acres), an essential parcel. A “161” agreement is in place over the tracts in the SJRWMD.

### **Management Policy Statement**

The primary goals of management of Indian River Lagoon Blueway project are: to conserve and protect environmentally unique and irreplaceable lands that contain native flora and fauna representing a natural area unique to or scarce within this state; to conserve and protect significant habitat for native species or endangered and threatened species; to conserve, protect, manage or restore important ecosystems in order to enhance or protect significant surface water, coastal, recreational, fish and wildlife resources which local or state regulatory programs cannot adequately protect; and to provide areas for natural resource-based recreation.

### **Manager(s)**

DRP management centers around the Mullet Creek area. DEP’s Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection also requested that the lands purchased for this project within St. Lucie County be leased directly to the county. The county has purchased parcels using county funds, Florida Communities Trust funding and other sources, and they would like to manage the land under a single plan. Other agencies participating as cooperating managers are the Brevard County EEL, Brevard Mosquito Control and Indian River Mosquito Control. Several of the previously listed cooperating managers are currently managing some of the tracts within the project boundaries. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) wishes to participate in the management of some sites (including Phase II sites). Additionally, SJRWMD and SFWMD will likely be cooperating managers on some sites as part of their Surface Water Improvement and Management Program. FWC will manage that part of the project that was formally the North Indian River Lagoon project. The Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge will manage the Pelican Island Addition site, if it is acquired.

Florida Atlantic University will manage the Harbor Branch sites. Management of land previously owned by the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute will be divided among several entities. Some of the unimproved uplands will be managed by the St. Lucie County Environmental Resources Division and some of the unimproved wetlands by the St. Lucie County Mosquito Control District. Much of the improved acreage will be leased by the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund for management by Harbor Branch Oceanographic Foundation or Florida Atlantic University.

### **Management Prospectus**

#### **Qualifications for State Designation**

The project will acquire numerous parcels adjoining the Indian River Lagoon. The habitats include freshwater marsh, salt marsh, mangrove fringe, maritime hammock, coastal strand, scrub, baygall and pine flatwoods. Many of the wetland sites are impounded or otherwise hydrologically altered.





Management and restoration of these habitats would provide protection for the Indian River Lagoon, increase estuarine habitat, and improve public access and recreational opportunities. The parcels fall within five aquatic preserves: Mosquito Lagoon, Banana River, Indian River—Malabar to Vero Beach, Indian River—Vero Beach to Fort. Pierce, and Jensen Beach to Jupiter Inlet, and therefore is appropriate for designation as a State Buffer Preserve.

### **Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management**

All acquisitions will initially be of “high need.” Most of the wetlands are impounded, some are connected to Indian River Lagoon and managed, and others are not. The long-term goal will be to reconnect all impoundments to Indian River Lagoon through control structures. Structures will have to be installed and maintained in many areas and dikes repaired or removed if no longer functional. Most of the upland parcels have been unmanaged and have exotic plant infestations and trash. Since most of the parcels are in urbanized areas the demand for water access will be high. Construction of several access points will be needed. Increased patrol and law enforcement presence will be necessary to prevent future dumping and vandalism. Long-term routine management activities within the upland areas will be at the “moderate need” level. However, due to the maintenance needs of the dikes and water control structures and the required management of water levels, the impoundments will continue to require “high need” management.

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

The management goals of this project are to utilize an ecosystems management approach: to enhance the protection of the adjacent Indian River Lagoon and its aquatic preserves; to conserve and restore coastal wetlands and uplands; to protect and manage native flora and fauna; to provide areas for boating, fishing, camping, hiking, bike riding, picnicking and nature appreciation; to protect archaeological and historical resources; to enhance public appreciation for natural diversity; and to cooperate with local mosquito control authorities to ensure that impoundments are properly managed. Upon acquisition, initial activities will concentrate on the site security of the upland properties, including posting, fencing where needed and patrols. Within the first year of appropriate funding, management activities will concentrate on trash removal, public access and planning for management activities such as impoundment management, restoration, prescribed fire, and exotic plant and animal eradication.

Appropriate access to the public will be provided while protecting sensitive resources on site. The site’s natural resources and threatened and endangered species will be inventoried, and a management plan will be formulated. The resource inventory will be used to identify sensitive areas that need special attention, protection or management and to locate areas that are appropriate for any recreational or administrative facilities. Unnecessary roads, fire lanes and hydrological disturbances will be abandoned and/or restored to the greatest extent practical. Infrastructure development will be confined to already disturbed areas and will be the minimum required to allow public access and to manage the property.

Long-range goals will be established by the management plan and will provide for ecological restoration, the removal of exotic species and the perpetuation and maintenance of natural communities. Prescribed





fires will be used to maintain the appropriate communities and associated wildlife populations. Management activities will also stress the protection of threatened and endangered species, and the preservation of the significant archaeological sites for professional investigation. Existing mosquito control impoundments will be reconnected to the Indian River Lagoon and rotational impoundment management implemented to meet both the goals of improved estuarine habitat and mosquito population management. Managed marshes offer excellent habitat for waterfowls and wading birds and viewing opportunities for the public.

**Revenue-generating Potential**

No revenue is expected to be directly generated from this property. The project will benefit the state indirectly by protecting or enhancing water quality, fisheries and public recreation activities, and preserving natural and historical resources.

**Cooperators in Management Activities**

This project will require a great deal of coordination between the affected parties. SJRWMD, SFWMD, Volusia/Brevard/Indian River/St. Lucie/Martin counties and local mosquito control districts have all expressed interest in some form of cooperative management of portions of the project. This level of cooperation is needed if the project is to successfully serve the multiple purposes for which it was designed. In a few cases intensive recreation or stormwater infrastructure have been suggested as management uses, which might not be compatible with the management approach or capabilities. Such parcels may be more appropriately managed directly by the interested agency. The Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge will manage the Pelican Island Addition site.

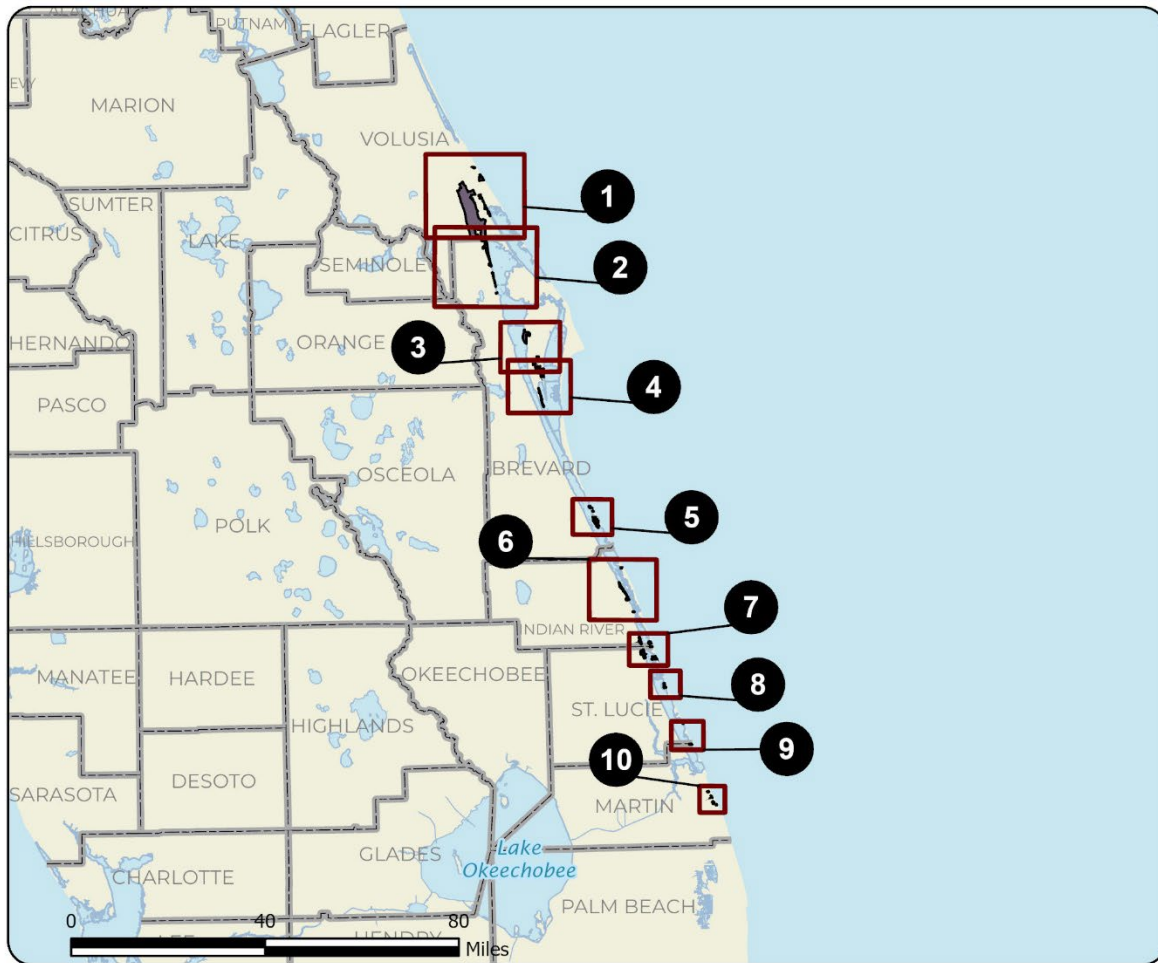
Management Cost Summary

<u>DRP</u>	<u>Startup</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
Salary	\$64,805	not provided
OPS	\$36,100	not provided
Expense	\$16,146	not provided
OCO	\$27,692	not provided
FCO	\$0	not provided
Other - Grant	\$15,000	not provided
Other - Special	\$20,311	not provided
TOTAL	\$180,054	not provided

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





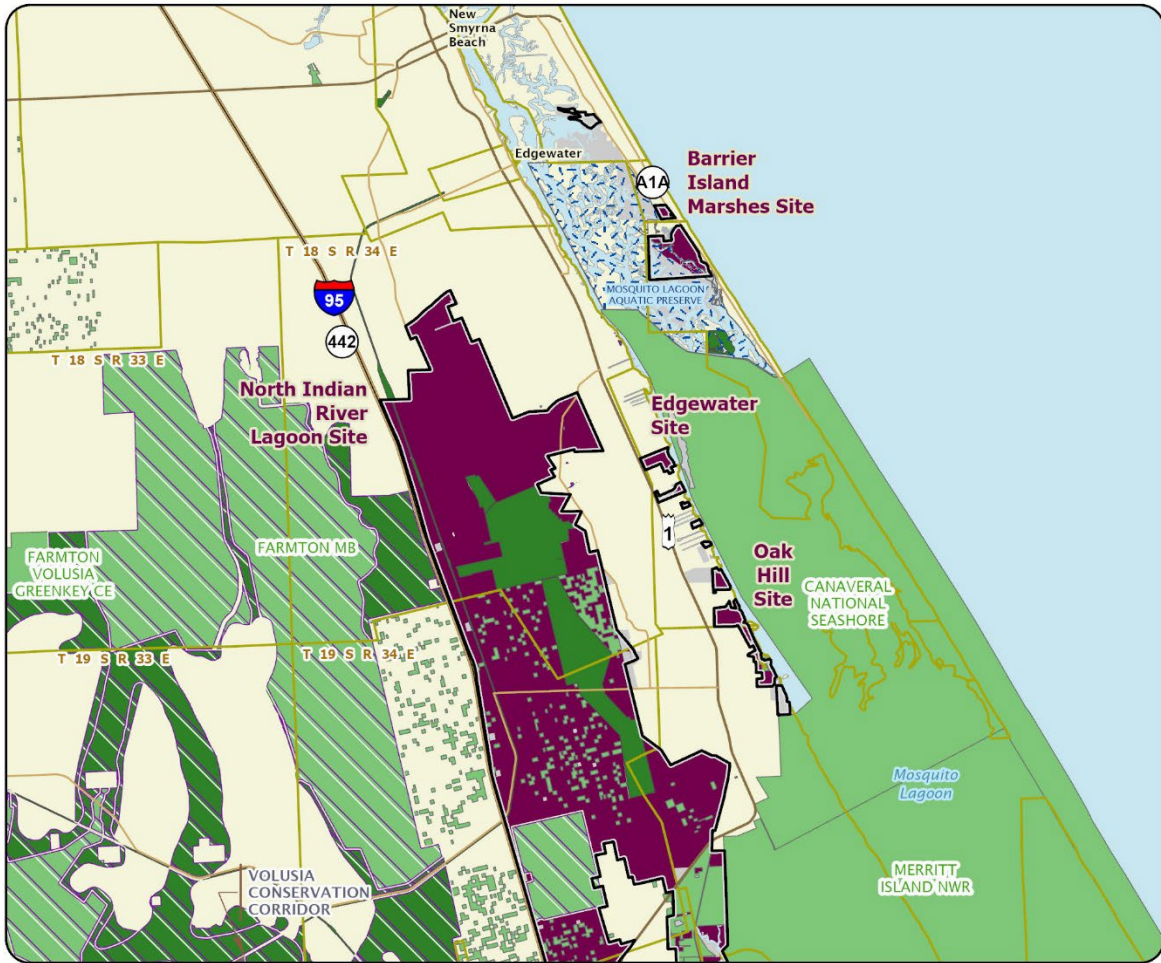


### INDIAN RIVER LAGOON BLUEWAY: OVERVIEW

#### BREVARD, INDIAN RIVER, MARTIN, ST. LUCIE, AND VOLUSIA COUNTIES

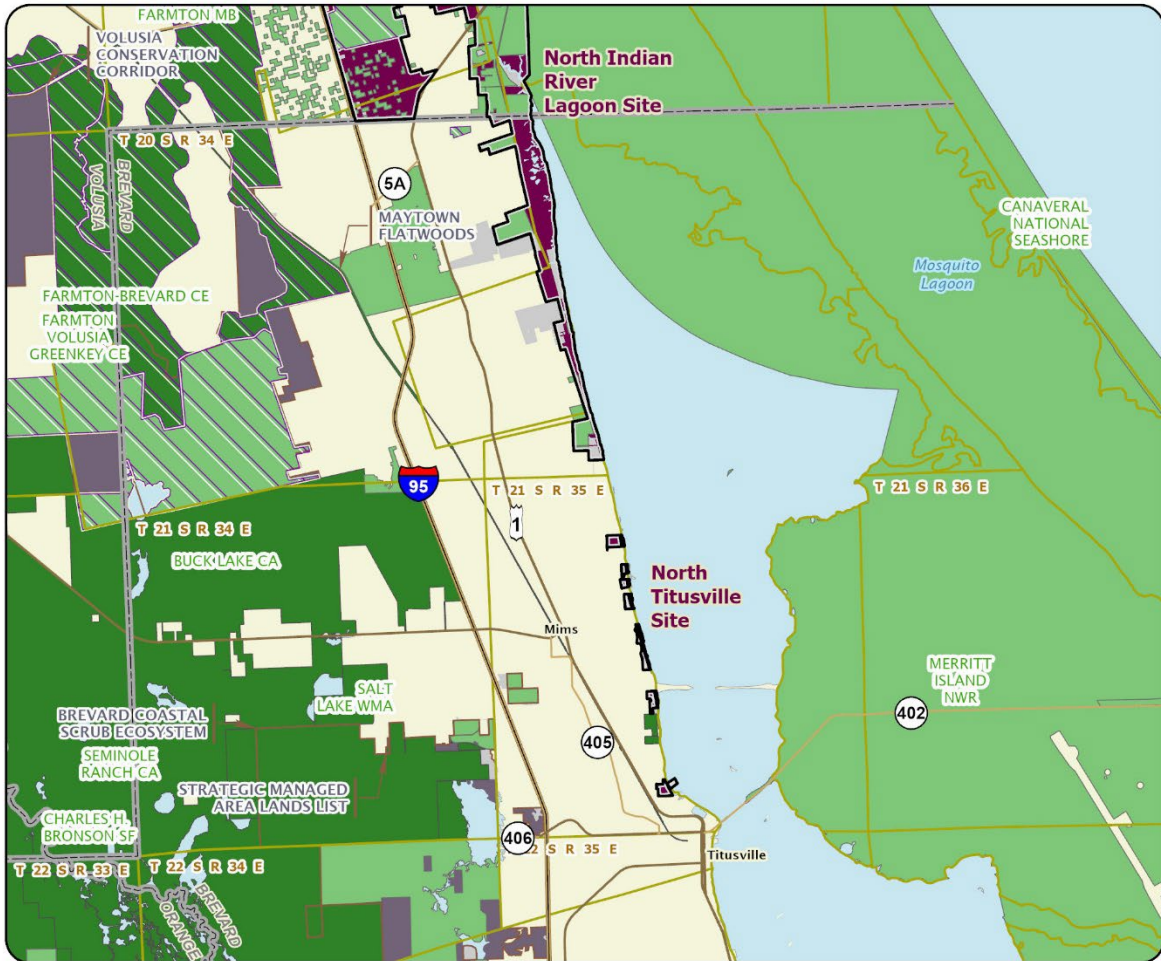
- Map 1 Barrier Island Marshes Site
- Map 1 Edgewater Site
- Map 1 North Indian River Lagoon Site
- Map 1 Oak Hill Site
- Map 2 North Indian River Lagoon Site
- Map 2 North Titusville Site
- Map 3 Pine Island Site
- Map 3 Sykes Creek Site
- Map 4 East Merritt Island Impoundment Sites
- Map 5 Hog Point Site
- Map 5 Mullet Creek Site
- Map 5 Old Oak Lodge Preserve Site
- Map 5 Snagg Point Site
- Map 5 Washburn Cove Site
- Map 6 Morgan's Impoundment Site
- Map 6 Pelican Island Addition Site
- Map 6 Vossinbury Site
- Map 6 Winter Beach Marsh Site
- Map 7 Avalon Site
- Map 7 Diamond Site
- Map 7 Harbor Branch Site
- Map 7 Martin Site
- Map 7 Oyster Bar Impoundment Site
- Map 7 Pappas Site
- Map 7 Queens Island Site
- Map 8 Bear Point Site
- Map 9 Hutchinson Island Addition Site
- Map 9 Jensen Site
- Map 10 Corset Sound Site
- Map 10 Gomez Site
- Map 10 Hobe Sound Site
- Map 10 Palmer Sound Site





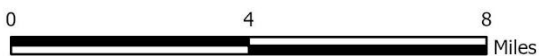
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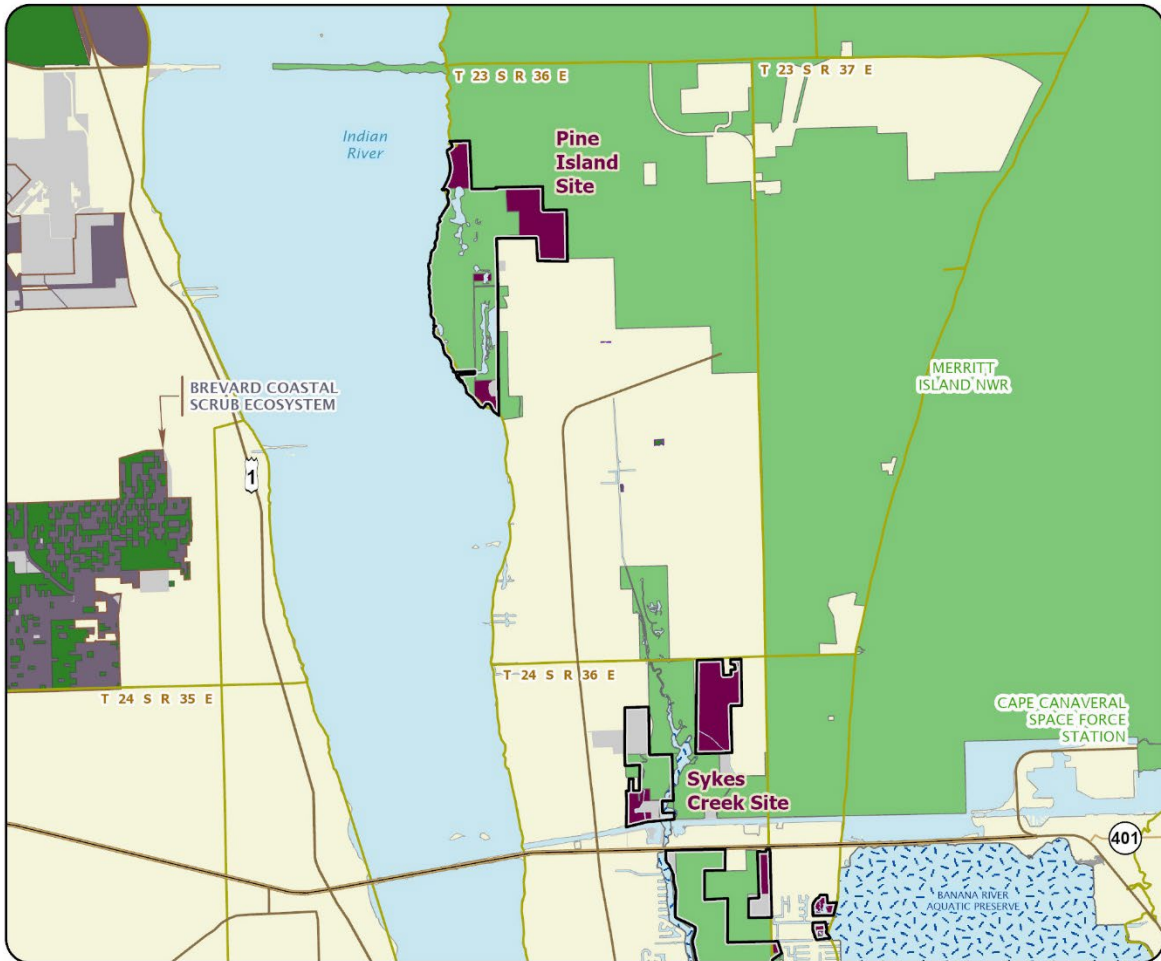




### INDIAN RIVER LAGOON BLUEWAY: MAP 2

#### BREVARD AND VOLUSIA COUNTIES

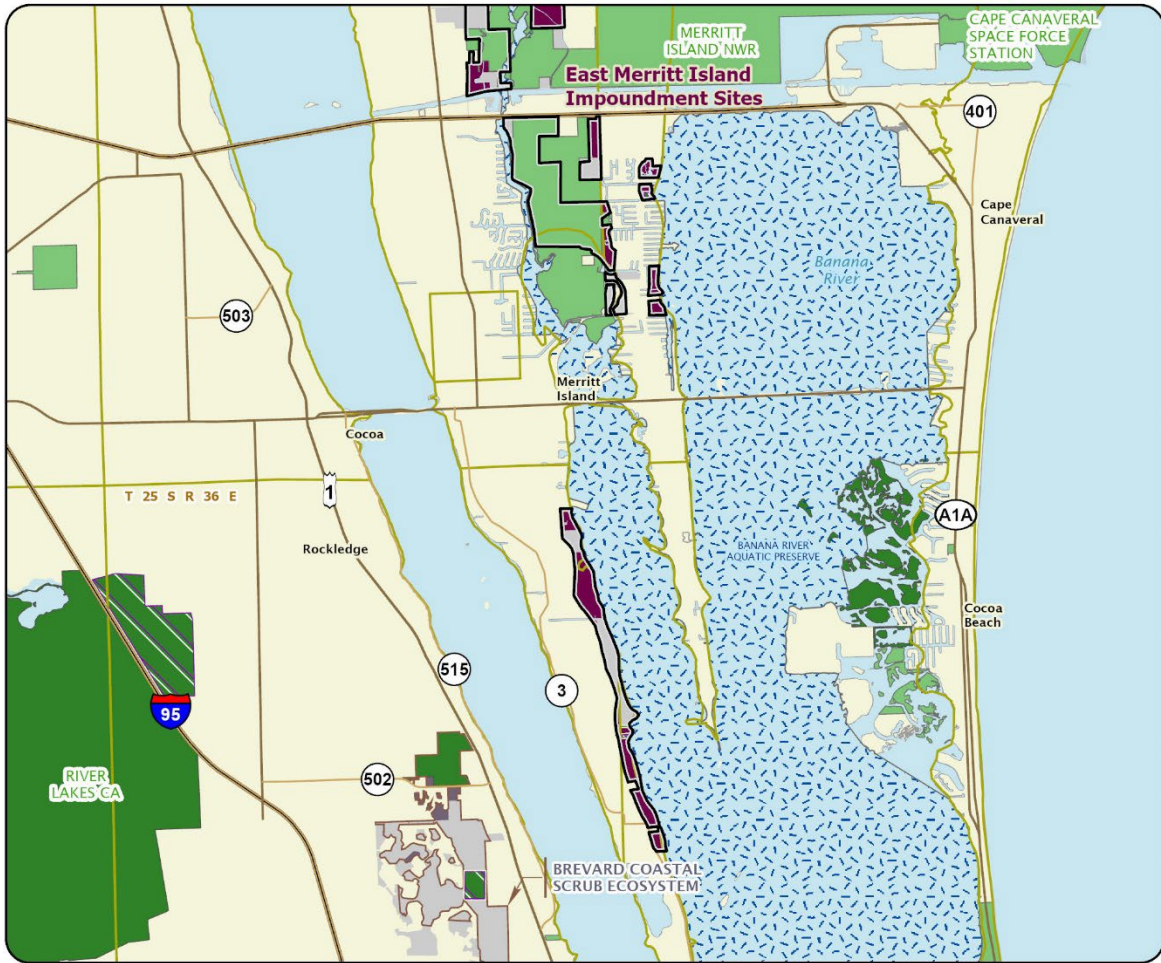




INDIAN RIVER LAGOON BLUEWAY: MAP 3

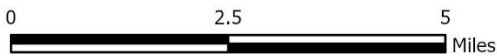
BREVARD COUNTY

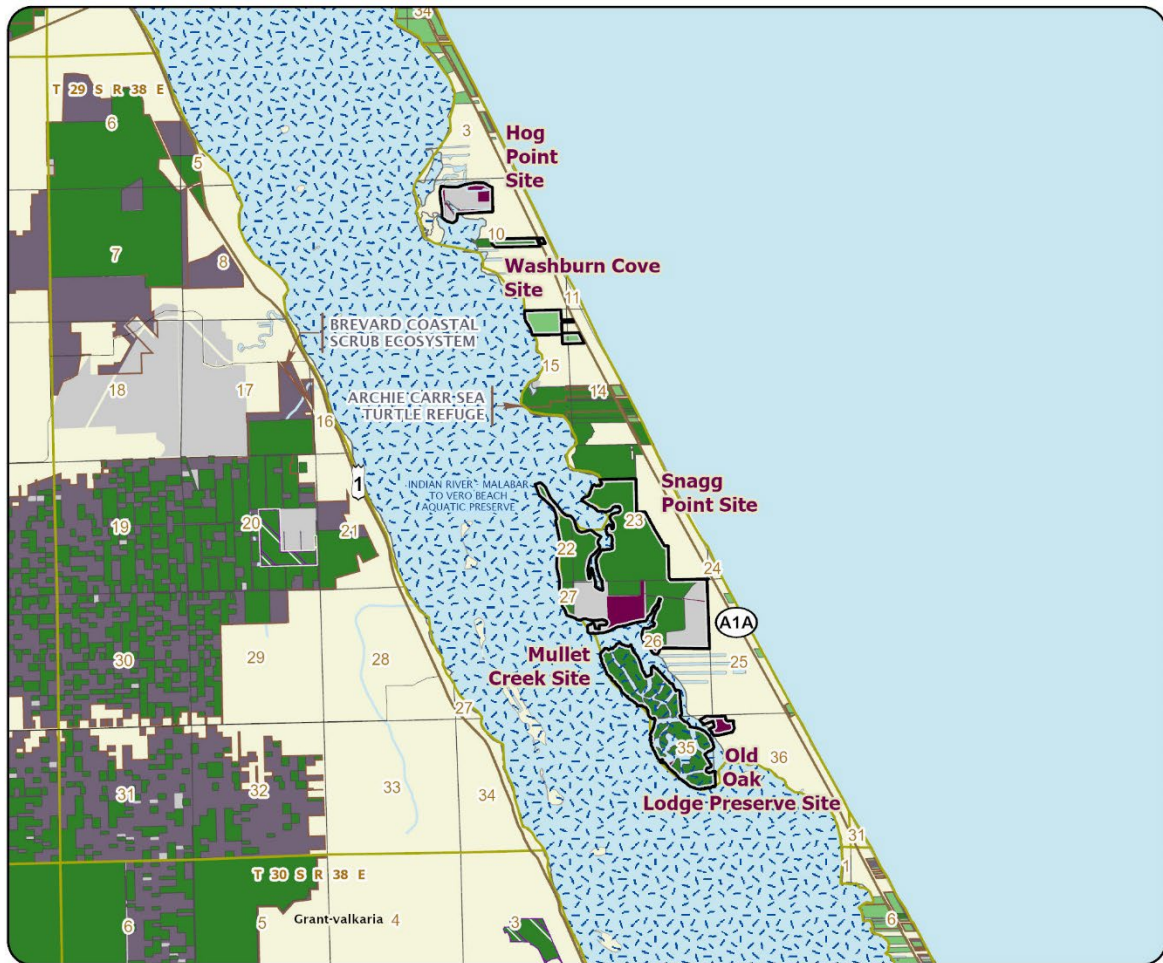




INDIAN RIVER LAGOON BLUEWAY: MAP 4

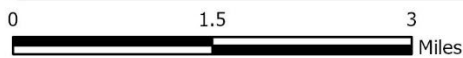
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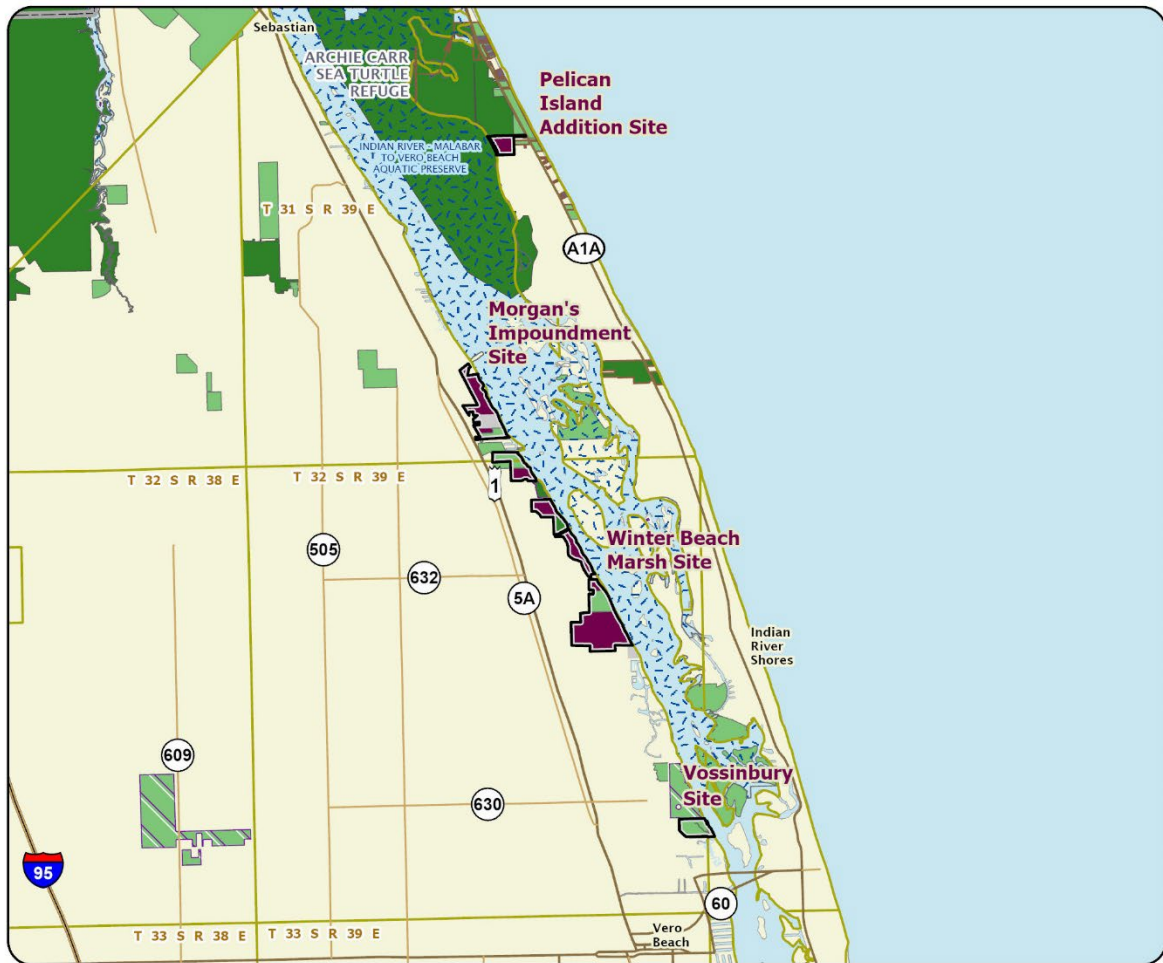




INDIAN RIVER LAGOON BLUEWAY: MAP 5

BREVARD COUNTY

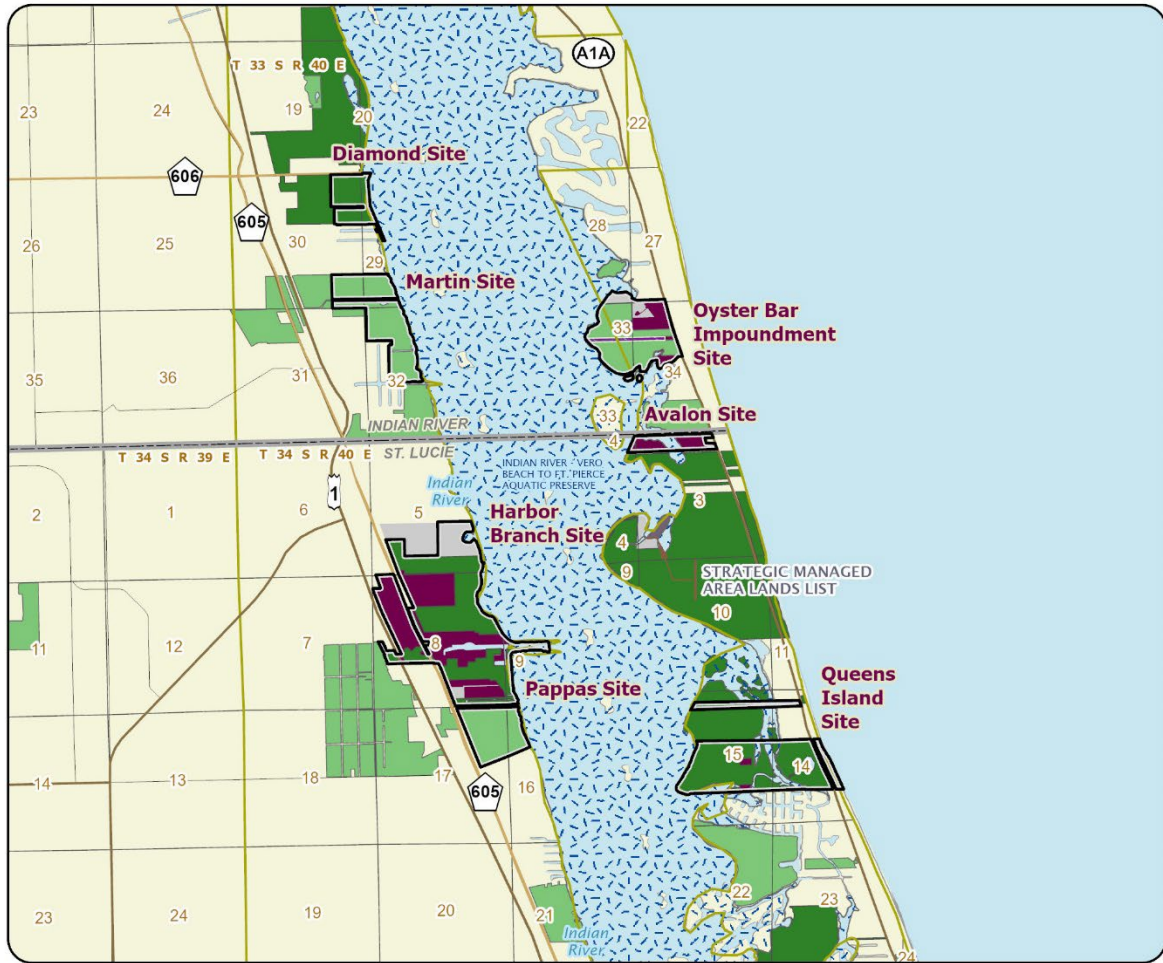




INDIAN RIVER LAGOON BLUEWAY: MAP 6

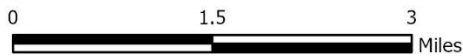
INDIAN RIVER COUNTY



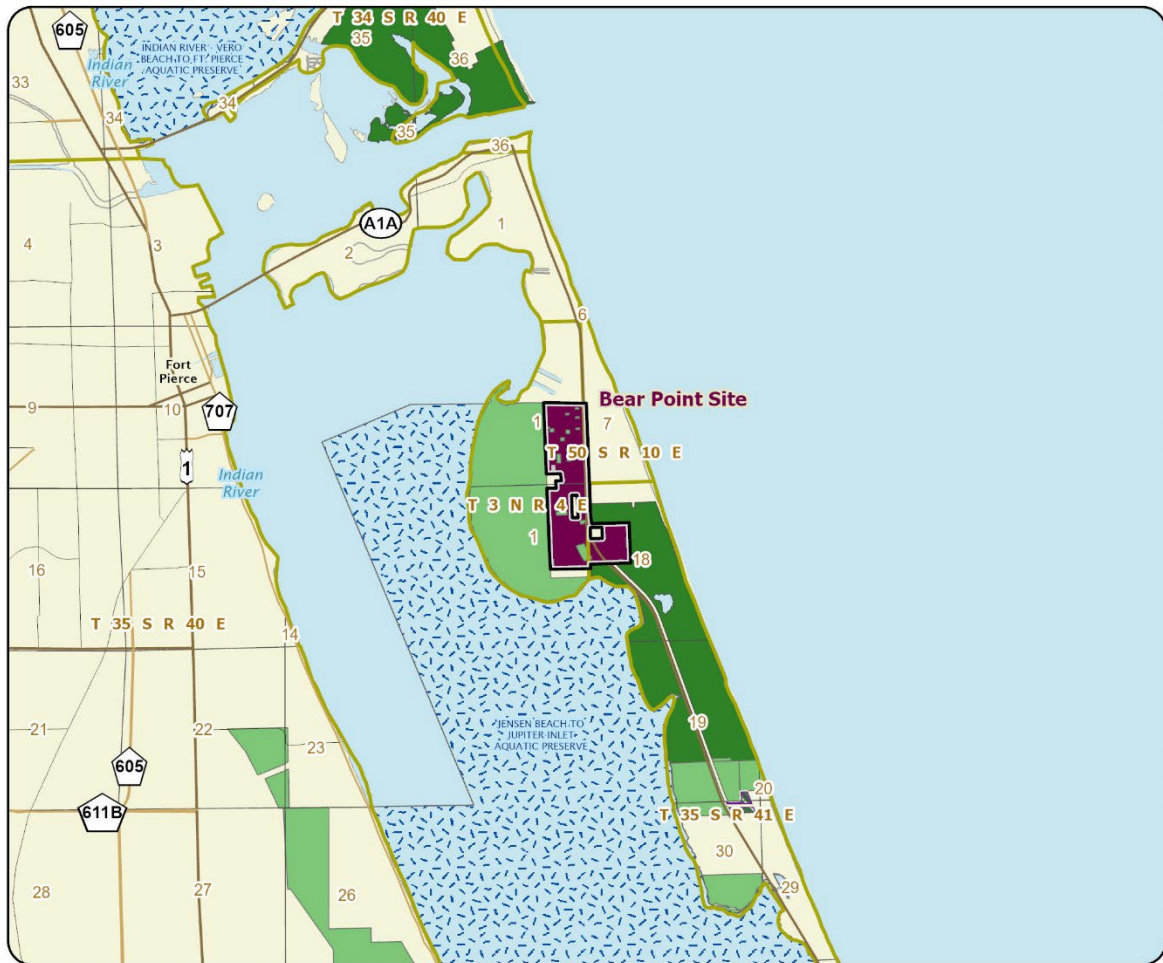


INDIAN RIVER LAGOON BLUEWAY: MAP 7

INDIAN RIVER AND ST. LUCIE COUNTIES

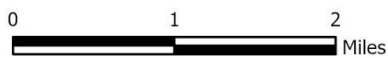


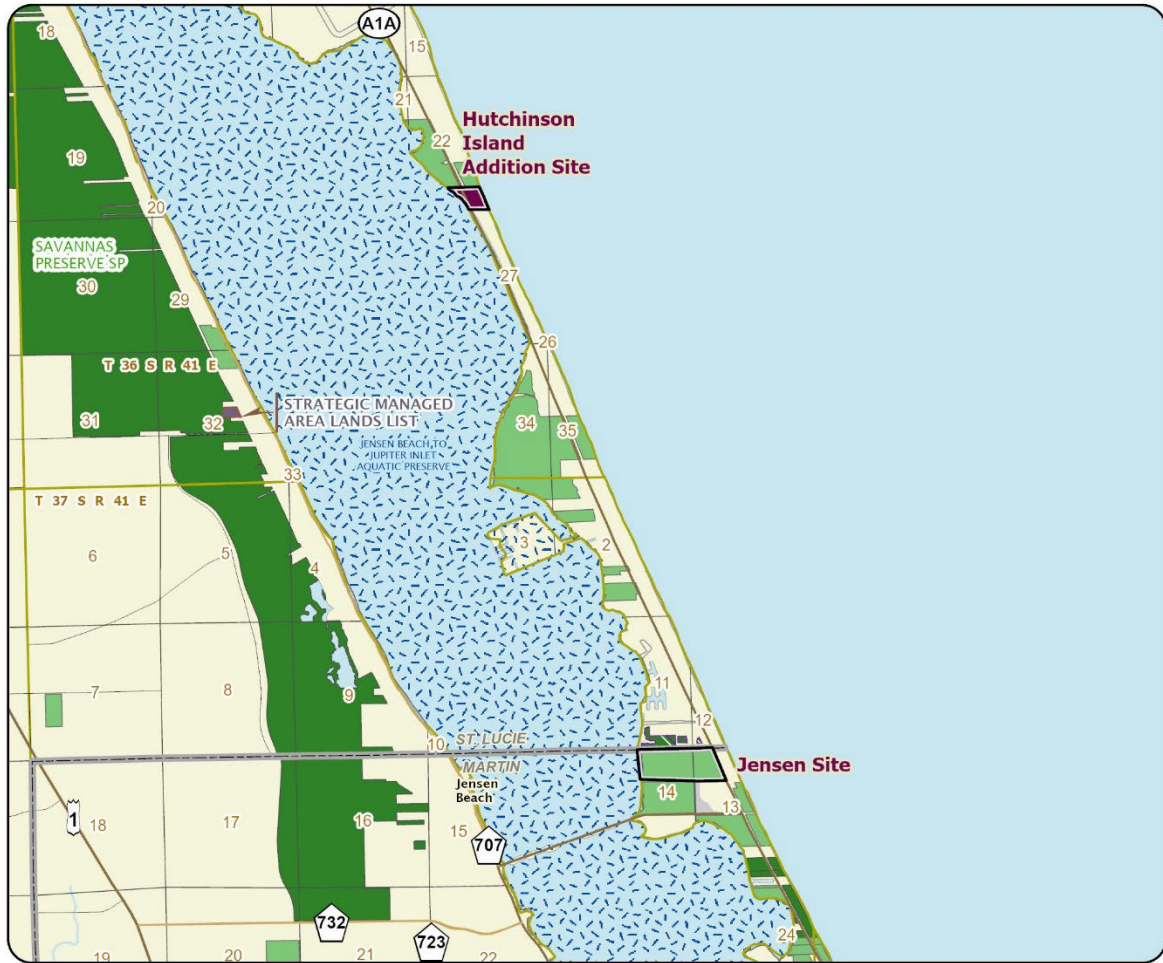




INDIAN RIVER LAGOON BLUEWAY: MAP 8

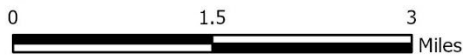
ST. LUCIE COUNTY

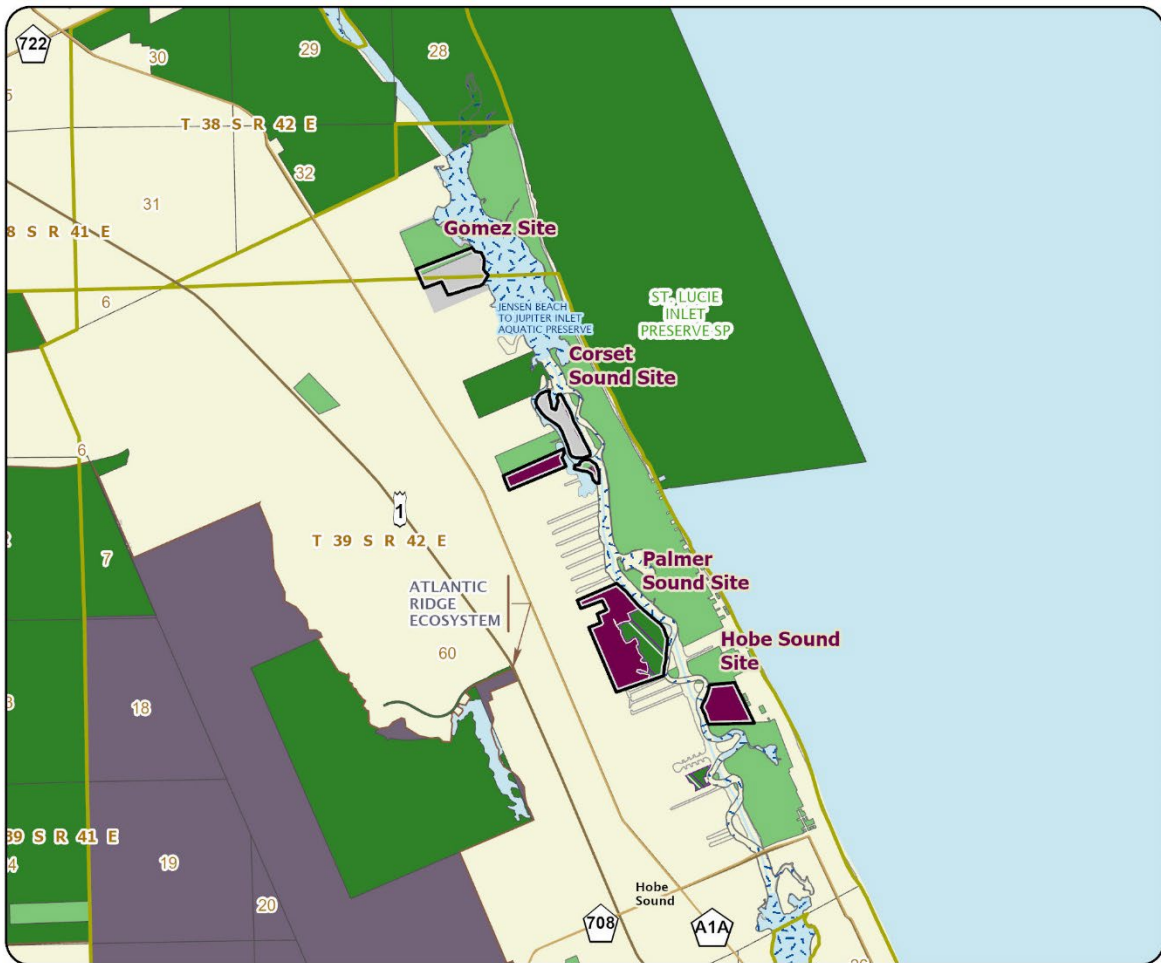




INDIAN RIVER LAGOON BLUEWAY: MAP 9

MARTIN AND ST. LUCIE COUNTIES





INDIAN RIVER LAGOON BLUEWAY: MAP 10

MARTIN COUNTY

