

Wakulla Springs Protection Zone

Partnerships and Regional Incentives

Leon and Wakulla Counties

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	1997
<i>Project Acres</i>	8,890
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	5,590
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$8,605,928
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	3,300
<i>2023 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$41,221,929

Purpose for State Acquisition

Wakulla Springs – one of the largest and deepest artesian springs in the world – is protected by Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park, but the enormous caverns that feed the spring spread far to the north and west of the state park. The Wakulla Springs Protection Zone project will protect Wakulla Springs by conserving the land that is above the conduits that feed it, connecting the state park with Apalachicola National Forest, and providing public areas for camping, hiking and hunting.

General Description

Most of the project is in intensive silviculture or pasture. The Upper Lake Lafayette portion of the project is mixed pines and hardwoods on hills sloping down to Lake Lafayette. Remnant natural areas include floodplain swamps and forests, and unique features like sinkholes, aquatic caves and spring-run streams.

The project is important to protecting the subterranean headwaters of Wakulla Springs – the state’s largest first magnitude spring – and source of the Wakulla River, which is one of the largest and deepest artesian springs in the world and an Outstanding Florida Water. At least five rare animals, including three crustaceans in aquatic caves, have been found here. Eight archaeological sites, including four mounds, are known on the site, and more can be expected. There is also a historic cemetery in the project. The sinkholes in the project are vulnerable to trash dumping and development, which may degrade the quality of water flowing into Wakulla Spring. Endangerment of the area is moderate.



FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<u>FNAI Elements</u>	<u>Score</u>
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
Woodville karst cave crayfish	G1/S1
Florida Big Bend cave amphipod	G1G2/S1S2
<i>incised groove-bur</i>	G3/S2
Florida cave amphipod	G2G3/S2S3
Eastern diamondback rattlesnake	G3/S3
Pine snake	G4/S3
Southeastern fox squirrel	G5T5/S3S4

Public Use

Portions of the project qualify as state park, state forest and wildlife management area. Hiking or bicycling trails could link the park through the area with the Apalachicola National Forest, and the project could also be suitable for camping, horseback riding and possibly hunting. The Upper Lake Lafayette land could be linked to such areas as the Lafayette Heritage Trail Park, Fallschase Greenway and L. Kirk Edwards Wildlife and Environmental Area.

Acquisition Planning

1996

On December 5, 1996, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council added the Wakulla Springs Protection Zone project to the 1997 Conservation and Recreational Lands Priority List. The fee-simple acquisition, sponsored by the Division of Recreation and Parks, consisted of approximately 10,243 acres and multiple owners. The essential parcels are the Ferrell tract, McBrides Slough tract and smaller tracts between Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park and the Ferrell Tract. The McBrides Slough tract has been mapped as a Division of Recreation and Parks Inholdings and Additions project.

1998

On October 15, 1998, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council designated approximately 1,004 acres that would connect the Ferrell tract with Apalachicola National Forest as essential.

1999

On December 9, 1999, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council removed 3,883 acres owned by the St. Joe Paper Company from the project boundary and placed them into the St. Joe Timberland Conservation and Recreational Lands project.

2001

On October 25, 2001, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved the addition of 59 acres to the project boundary.

2006

On June 9, 2006, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved a fee-simple, 152-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by DEP's Florida Springs Initiative, consisted of seven owners and had a 2005 taxable value of \$94,268. One owner, Linderand, Inc., holds title to property within the current





project boundary. The parcels were designated as essential since they are important to the future water quality of Wakulla Springs.

2007

On December 14, 2007, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved the addition of 700 acres to the project boundary.

2011

On December 9, 2011, the Acquisition and Restoration Council placed the project in the new Partnerships and Regional Incentives category.

2014

In 2014, a Tallahassee citizens' group – the Buck Lake Alliance – proposed making the 373-acre Upper Lake Lafayette Aquifer Protection proposal a Florida Forever project. The project had an estimated tax assessed value of \$3,599,447.

On December 12, 2014, the Acquisition and Restoration Council added the Upper Lake Lafayette Aquifer Protection proposal area to the Florida Forever Priority List and then incorporated its boundary into the boundary of the Wakulla Springs Protection Zone project.

2018

On February 16, 2018, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved the addition of Revell Sinks (228 acres) to the project boundary.

2019

On December 12, 2019, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved the addition of 801 acres in Wakulla County to the project boundary for fee simple acquisition. The addition had a 2019 tax assessed value of \$1,925,754. The Florida Forest Service is the recommended manager, and the lands would be managed as part of Wakulla State Forest. The addition would contribute to landscape linkage between existing public lands, provide aquifer protection for Wakulla Springs and enhance wildlife habitat as well as public recreation. The land within the approved boundary was designated essential.

2020

On August 19, 2020, the Northwest Florida Water Management District established the Revell conservation easement (124.74 acres).

2022

In 2022, DEP acquired 405.79 acres fee-simple from six property owners that will be managed as part of Wakulla State Forest.

Coordination

Considering the project's linkages and connections both above and below ground, coordination would be among the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Division of Recreation and Parks, Florida Forest Service, Florida Wildlife Federation, Florida Geological Survey, U.S. Forest Service, local governments and nonprofit conservation groups.





Management Policy Statement

The primary objective of management of the Wakulla Springs Protection Zone project is to preserve the water quality of Wakulla Springs by protecting the land above the underground conduits that supply the spring. Achieving this objective will provide a refuge for extremely rare cave-dwelling crustaceans, preserve wildlife habitat in this developing region and provide various recreational opportunities, such as camping and hiking, to the public. Management activities should be directed toward the protection of surface-water and groundwater quality. Managers should control public access to the project; limit public motor vehicles to one or a few major roads and route them away from sinkholes; inventory resources; and monitor management activities to ensure that they are preserving the quality of the groundwater. Managers should limit the number and size of recreational facilities, such as hiking trails, ensure that they avoid the most sensitive resources, particularly sinkholes and spring runs, and site them in already disturbed areas when possible.

If less-than-fee purchases are made within the project, activities such as silviculture, road improvements or any development should be strictly monitored to ensure that surface water and groundwater quality in the project area is maintained or improved. In areas managed by the Florida Forest Service, the primary land management goal is to restore, maintain and protect in perpetuity all native ecosystems; to integrate compatible human use; and to ensure long-term viability of populations and species considered rare. This ecosystem approach will guide the Florida Forest Service's management activities on the project. For areas managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, priority will be given to the conservation and protection of environmentally unique native habitats and threatened and endangered species. Under Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission management, the tract will also provide opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, hiking and other natural resource-based recreational activities.

Manager(s)

Managers include the Division of Recreation and Parks, Florida Forest Service and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The Upper Lake Lafayette Aquifer Protection Area site added to the project in 2014 may also be managed with the help of the Florida Wildlife Federation.

Management Prospectus

Qualifications for State Designation

The unique subterranean resources connected with Wakulla Springs, one of Florida's most significant artesian springs and already managed as Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park, qualify the project as a unit of the state park system. The project's size and diversity of resources makes portions of it also desirable for use and management as a state forest and a wildlife management area. Management as a state forest is contingent upon the state acquiring fee-simple title to the core parcels.

Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management

Division of Recreation and Parks

Under fee title acquisition, the Wakulla Springs Protection Zone will be a high-need management area. Resource restoration, public recreation, environmental education and development compatible with long-term resource protection will be an integral aspect of management. The areas around karst windows,





springs and associated sloughs are often, and in some cases currently are, being subjected to uses that degrade the resource. The lands between the state park and the national forest, west of State Road 61, contain a significant number of hydrological features which will require intensive management of people to ensure against resource degradation by users and allow for restoration where needed. Springs, karst windows and sinks are popular recreation sites. Hence, there will be a demand for their use. Close monitoring and study will be needed to decide which are suitable for public use and at what levels, followed with appropriate management measures. This concept also applies to other areas of the project managed by the Division of Recreation and Parks where the natural regime has been disturbed by silviculture and other land uses.

Florida Forest Service

Many areas of the project will require considerable restoration efforts. Until these efforts are completed, the level of management intensity and related management costs is expected to be somewhat higher than what would be expected in a typical state forest.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

The proposal generally includes lands that are low need tracts requiring basic resource management, including the frequent use of prescribed fire. The Ferrell Property represents a relatively intact longleaf pine/wire grass community. Land use in the general area has severely impacted this community type. Close attention will need to be paid to ensure the perpetuation of the community through appropriate burning and other management practices, if acquired in fee title. The primary management needed for perpetuation of the natural communities on the area is the introduction of all-season prescribed fire and control of human access. On portions of existing disturbed areas such as the agricultural fields, native and non-native agronomic plantings will be used to benefit both game and non-game wildlife on the area and to promote special hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities for the public. Development of facilities, as in all wildlife management areas, would be kept to the minimum level to assure a high-quality recreational experience for those members of the public interested in less infrastructure and other disturbance factors.

Florida Wildlife Federation

The property is adjacent to commercial and residential development on the urban fringe. There is a platform mound on the property, which is incompletely fenced, and completed fencing will be needed. There are invasive plant species on the property, which will have to be managed. Managing the site for soil protection and for vegetative cover will offer the best protection for Upper Lake Lafayette.

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

Division of Recreation and Parks

Upon fee title acquisition, public access will be provided for low-intensity, non-facility-related outdoor recreation. As part of Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park, hunting would not be permitted.

Vehicular access by the public will be confined to designated points and routes. Emphasis will be given to the protection of springs and associated sloughs, sinks and karst windows. Resource management activities in the first year of each fee title acquisition will concentrate on site security (including posting boundaries) and development of a resource inventory in conjunction with the development of a comprehensive management plan. Long-term management may include a wide range of resource-based





recreation and associated facilities. The integration of appropriate public uses will create wildlife and recreational linkages between the state park and the national forest.

Florida Forest Service

Once the core area is acquired and assigned to the Florida Forest Service, public access will be provided for non-facilities-related, low-intensity outdoor recreation. Until specific positions are provided for the project, public access will be coordinated through the Florida Forest Service's Tallahassee District Headquarters and management activities will be conducted with district personnel.

Initial or intermediate management efforts will concentrate on site security, public and fire management access, resource inventory and removal of trash. Steps will be taken to ensure that the public is provided appropriate access while simultaneously affording protection of sensitive resources. Vehicular use by the public will be confined to designated roads. Any unnecessary access points will be closed. An inventory of the site's natural resources and threatened and endangered flora and fauna will be conducted to provide the basis for formulation of a management plan.

Prior to collection of necessary resource information, management proposals for the project can only be conceptual in nature. Long-range plans for the property will generally be directed toward the restoration of disturbed areas and maintenance of natural communities. Management activities will also stress enhancement of the abundance and spatial distribution of threatened and endangered species. To the greatest extent practical, disturbed sites will be restored to conditions that would be expected to occur in naturally functioning ecosystems. Pine plantations will be thinned to achieve a more natural appearance. Off-site species will eventually be replaced with species that would be expected to occur naturally on the site. An all-season burning program will be established, utilizing practices that incorporate recent research findings.

Whenever possible, existing roads, black lines, foam lines and natural breaks will be utilized to contain and control prescribed and natural fires. Timber management activities will primarily consist of improvement thinning and regeneration harvests aimed at maintaining and perpetuating forest ecosystems. Stands will not have a targeted rotation age but will be managed to maintain a broad diversity of age classes ranging from young stands to areas with old growth characteristics. This will provide habitat for the full spectrum of species that would be found in the natural environment. 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.

Infrastructure development will primarily be located in already disturbed areas and will be the absolute minimum required to allow public access for the uses mentioned above, to provide facilities to accommodate public use, and to administer and manage the property.

Recreation and environmental education in the natural environment by the Florida Forest Service, though no recreational facilities are planned. However, if it is later determined that facilities are needed, the use of low impact, rustic facilities will be stressed. High impact, organized recreation areas will be discouraged because of 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.





Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

During the first year after acquisition, emphasis will be placed on site security, posting boundaries, public access, fire management, resource inventory and removal of trash. A conceptual management plan will be developed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, describing the goals and objectives of future resource management. Long-range plans will stress ecosystem management, protection and management of threatened and endangered species and management of small game hunting opportunities. Essential roads will be stabilized to provide all weather public access and manage operations. Programs providing multiple recreational uses will also be implemented. An all-season prescribed burning management plan will be developed and implemented using conventional and biologically acceptable guidelines. Management activities will strive to manage natural plant communities to benefit native wildlife resources.

Where appropriate and practical, timber resources will be managed using acceptable silvicultural practices as recommended by the Florida Forest Service. These practices will include reforestation of cleared pinelands and natural regeneration of pine plantations.

Florida Wildlife Federation

It will take a minimum of one year to develop a management plan for the Upper Lake Lafayette acreage after the area is acquired. Fencing the east and west boundaries will be necessary to create limited access points. Cultural resource sites will have to be identified and fenced off from general access.

Revenue-generating potential

Division of Recreation and Parks

The Division of Recreation and Parks expects no significant revenue from the property immediately after fee title acquisition, and the amount of any future revenue will depend on the nature and extent of public use and facilities developed.

Florida Forest Service

The Florida Forest Service will sell timber as needed to improve or maintain desirable ecosystem conditions. These sales will primarily take place in upland pine stands and will provide a variable source of revenue, but the revenue-generating potential of the project is expected to be moderate.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission may also sell timber to help offset operational costs. Future revenue from timber resources will depend on successful reforestation and management of cleared pinelands. Additional revenue would be generated from sales of hunting licenses, fishing licenses, wildlife management area stamps and other special hunting stamps or permits.

Florida Wildlife Federation

The Florida Wildlife Federation does not expect the Upper Lake Lafayette property to generate revenue from admissions, but it will contribute to the local economy by spurring sales of outdoor goods and services.





Cooperators in management activities

Division of Recreation and Parks

The Division of Recreation and Parks will, as appropriate, cooperate with local governments, other state agencies and the Northwest Florida Water Management District to further resource management, recreational and educational opportunities, and the development of the lands for state park purposes.

Florida Forest Service and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

The Florida Forest Service and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will also cooperate with other state and local governmental agencies in managing the area.

Florida Wildlife Federation

The Florida Wildlife Federation developed a Management Prospectus for the Upper Lake Lafayette portion of the Wakulla Springs Protection Zone and suggests that its volunteers can help see that trails are properly maintained.

Management Cost Summary

<u>DRP</u>	<u>Startup</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
Source of Funds	CARL	CARL
Salary	\$48,840	\$48,840
OPS	\$10,000	\$10,000
Expense	\$86,342	\$6,342
OCO	\$58,956	\$0
FCO	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	\$204,138	\$65,182

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted

Management Cost Summary

<u>FFS</u>	<u>Startup</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
Source of Funds	CARL	not provided
Salary	\$65,343	not provided
OPS	\$0	not provided
Expense	\$90,000	not provided
OCO	\$129,000	not provided
FCO	\$0	not provided
TOTAL	\$284,343	not provided

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted



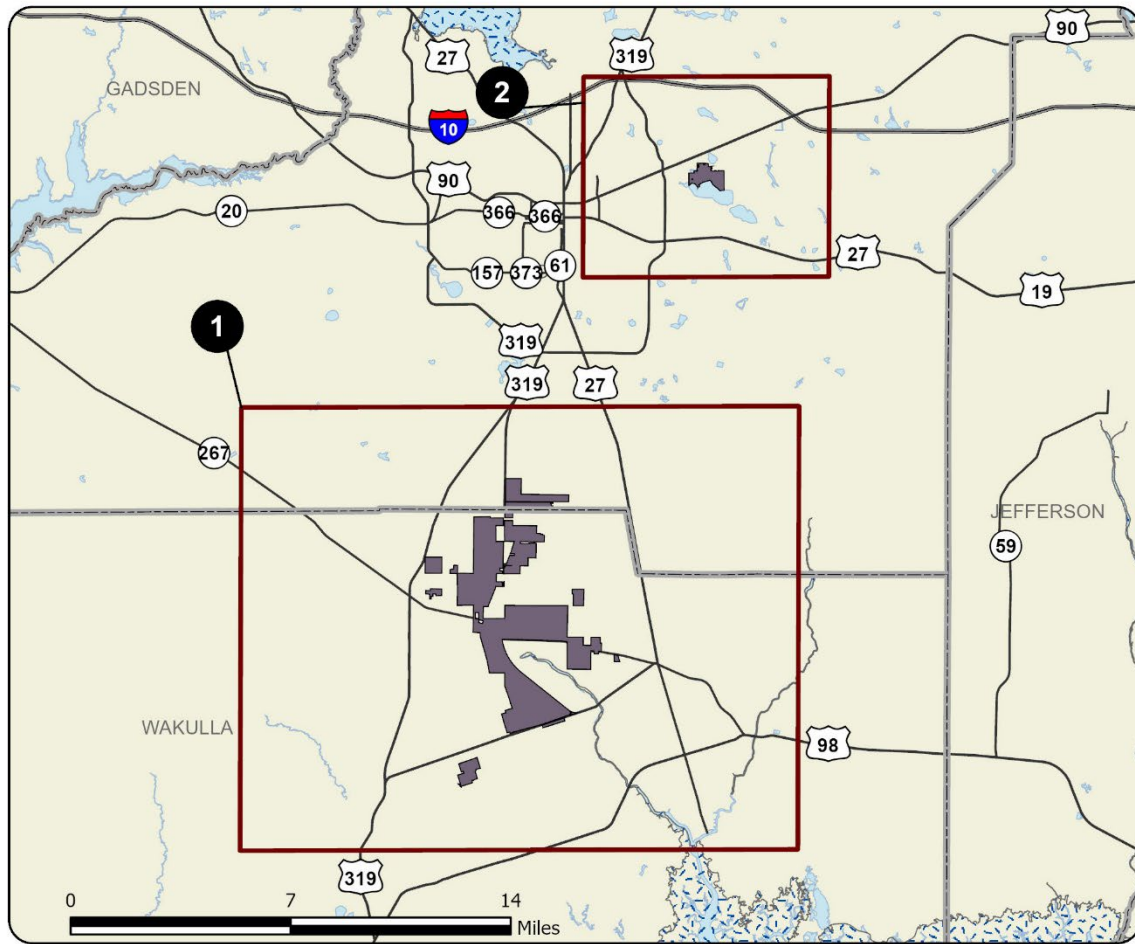


Management Cost Summary

<u>FWC</u>	<u>Startup</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
Source of Funds	CARL	CARL
Salary	\$37,170	\$74,340
OPS	\$7,000	\$7,000
Expense	\$45,000	\$60,000
OCO	\$38,500	\$38,500
FCO	\$75,000	\$0
TOTAL	\$202,670	\$179,840

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted

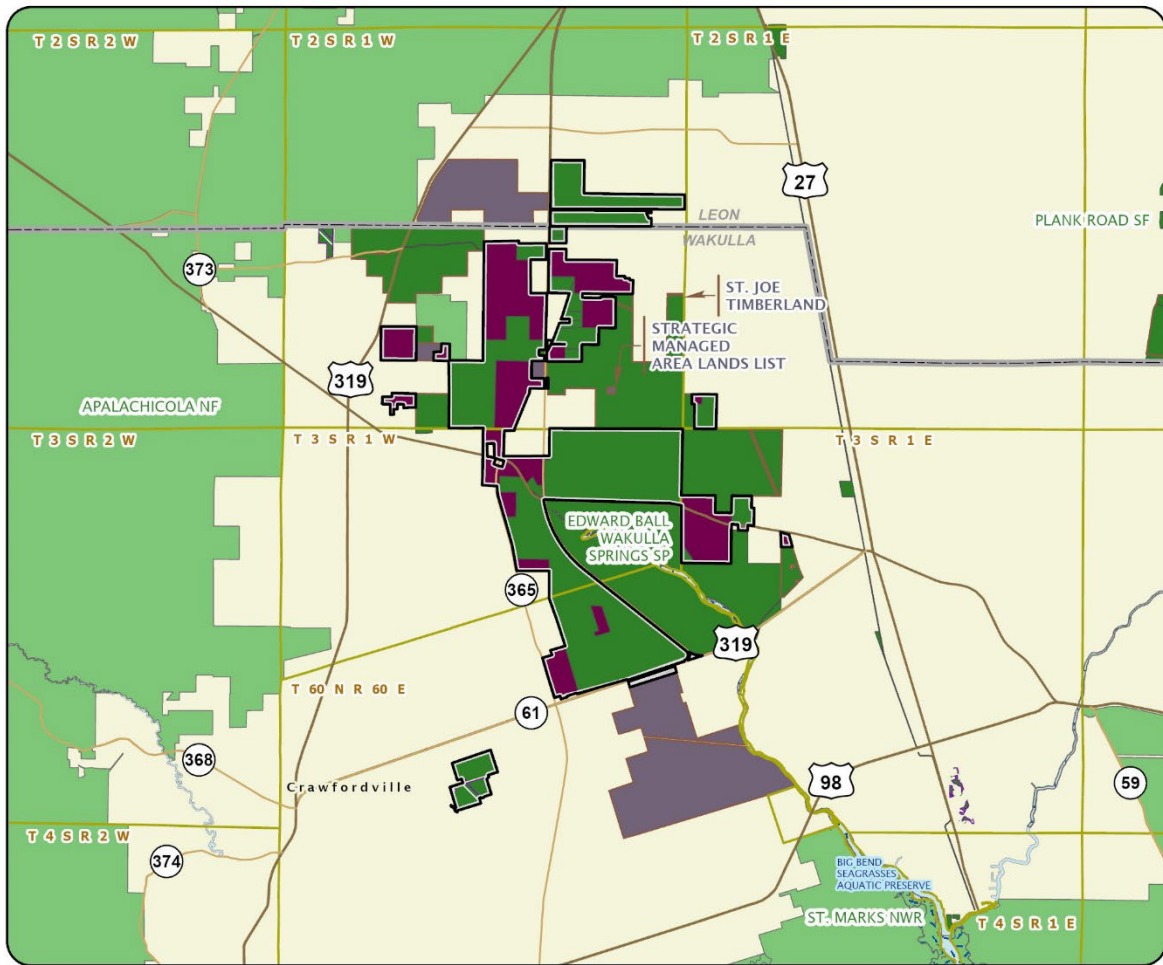




WAKULLA SPRINGS PROTECTION ZONE: OVERVIEW

LEON AND WAKULLA COUNTIES

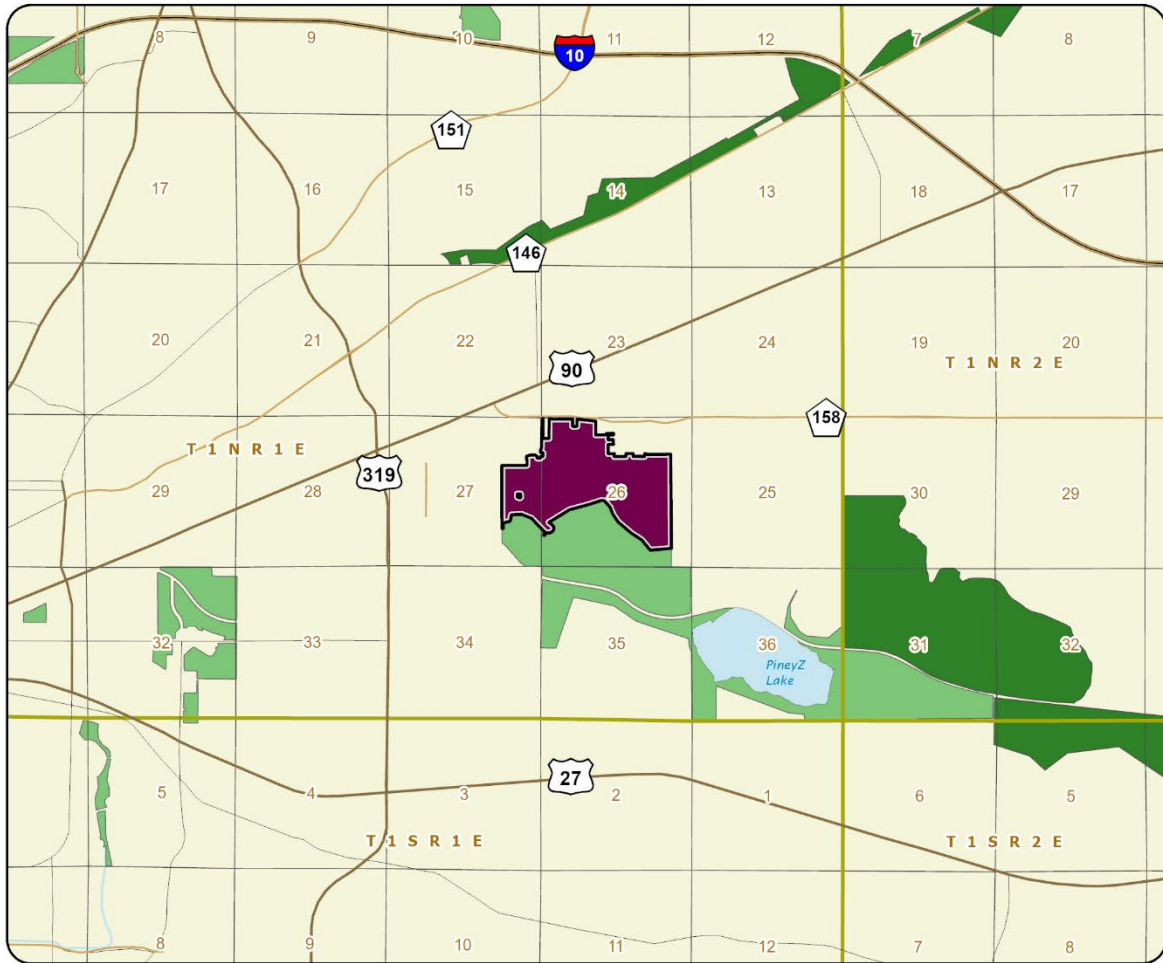




WAKULLA SPRINGS PROTECTION ZONE: MAP 1

LEON AND WAKULLA COUNTIES





WAKULLA SPRINGS PROTECTION ZONE: MAP 2

LEON COUNTY

