ITEM 10:

Consider the Ruth B. Kirby Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park Management Plan (Lease No. 4814)

LOCATION:

Gilchrist County

DSL STAFF REMARKS:

Background

Ruth B. Kirby Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park (RKGBSSP) is in Gilchrist County about five miles to the west of High Springs, FL in the north central part of them state along the Santa Fe River. The park is located 25 miles south of Lake City and about 20 miles to the northwest of Gainesville (see Vicinity Map). Access to the park is from Hwy 236 (CR 340) and NE 80th St. The park was officially acquired on October 6, 2017 with funds from the Florida Forever Trust Fund and on October 30, 2017, Ruth B. Kirby Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park officially opened as Florida's 175th state park. Currently, the park comprises 402.42 acres. The Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (Trustees) hold fee simple title to the park and on January 3, 2018 the Trustees leased (Lease Number 4814 the property to DRP under a 50-year lease.

The purpose of Gilchrist Blue Springs is to protect the water quality of Gilchrist Blue Spring and the park's other known springs; provide for the restoration and preservation of one of Florida's iconic natural spring ecosystems; and to preserve these unique resources for the perpetual enjoyment of future generations.

Management Plan Overview

The Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) has identified twelve distinct natural community types at RKGBSSP. They also identified five altered landcover type. The predominant natural communities are sandhill and bottomland forest. One species of imperiled plant and five species of imperiled animals have been identified at RKGBSSP.

The Division of Historical Resources (DHR) maintains a Master Site File that documents many of Florida's archaeological and historical features. A review of information obtained from the Florida Master Site File (FMSF) disclosed two archaeological sites within the park.

Recreational opportunities at RKGBSSP include tubing, snorkeling, and swimming at the main headspring and along the spring run. Picnic pavilions are available, and a concession stand provides food, beverages and canoe and kayak rentals. Camping is available with several RV campsites with 30-amp electricity and additional sites without power. A short nature trail provides access to several other interesting karst features as well as portions of the park's floodplain forest and upland sandhill.

The Florida Legislature requires that all land management plans include long and short-term (ST) goals. These goals must be measurable objectives, and ST goals must be achievable within a two-year planning period. Pursuant to changes to Section 253.034, F.S., the Division of State Lands tracks the status of short-term goals in each land management plan approved since July 1, 2016. The short-term goals from this management plan are included as part of this item.

While the ten-year management plan serves as the basic statement of policy and future direction

for each park, a number of annual work plans provide more specific guidance for DRP staff to accomplish many of the resource management goals and objectives of the park. Where such detailed planning is appropriate to the character and scale of the park's natural resources, annual work plans are developed for prescribed fire management, exotic plant management and imperiled species management. Annual or longer-term work plans are developed for natural community restoration and hydrological restoration.

Public Involvement

DRP solicited public input by conducting a public workshop and advisory group meeting on October 23rd and 24th, 2019, respectively. The purpose was to present the management plan to the public. The purpose of the advisory group meeting was to provide the Advisory Group members the opportunity to review and discuss the management plan.

The DRP staff has recommended approval of the proposed management plan for RKGBSSP as presented, with the following significant changes:

- Language will be added to the plan to consider the use of the existing entrance road footprint for the proposed alignment of the new park drive.
- Plan language will be reviewed and strengthened as necessary to direct that the design of new park entrance drive minimizes impacts to the restoration and long-term management and protection of the park's sandhill community;
- Language will be added to the conceptual land use plan to install protective fencing and overlooks or other protective measures at the park's springs that are closed to recreational activity;
- Language discussing the roping and closing sections of the spring run and spring bowl will be added to clarify that this activity is taking place for vegetation reestablishment.

Surplus Lands

The evaluation by the DRP determined that no portion of the RKGBSSP is recommended for a potential surplus designation.

State Land Management Review Team

This property has not been subject to a recent review by an inter-agency land management review team.

DSL STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve management plan.

ARC RECOMMENDATION:

( ) APPROVE
( ) APPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS: _____
( ) DEFER
( ) WITHDRAW
( ) NOT APPROVE
( ) OTHER:_____

Ruth B. Kirby Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park
Land management plan short term goals

Goal (ST)	Details of Goal	Objective	Details of Objective	Action	Details of Action	Measures
II	Protect water quality and quantity in the park, restore hydrology to the extent feasible, and maintain the restored condition.	A	Evaluate and mitigate impacts of soil erosion in the park.	1	Investigate best management options for additional erosion mitigation in public access areas.	Assessment conducted.
II	Protect water quality and quantity in the park, restore hydrology to the extent feasible, and maintain the restored condition.	C	Restore natural hydrological conditions and functions to approximately 2 acres of spring-run stream natural community.	1	Close Naked Spring and lower Gilchrist Blue spring-run stream and other sensitive features in the park to swimming and wading activity to all SAV restoration. Limit swimming and wading to the currently designated swimming area within the Gilchrist Blue main spring.	Policy Implemented
II	Protect water quality and quantity in the park, restore hydrology to the extent feasible, and maintain the restored condition.	C	Restore natural hydrological conditions and functions to approximately 2 acres of spring-run stream natural community.	2	Develop and implement a plan to re-establish littoral and shoreline vegetation adjacent to the swimming area and establish designed water entry points in the swimming area.	Monitoring implemented.

Goal (ST)	Details of Goal	Objective	Details of Objective	Action	Details of Action	Measures
II	Protect water quality and quantity in the park, restore hydrology to the extent feasible, and maintain the restored condition.	C	Restore natural hydrological conditions and functions to approximately 2 acres of spring-run stream natural community.	4	Develop and implement monitoring protocols for semi-annual SAV assessments and continuous monitoring in Gilchrist and Naked springs and their associated spring-run streams.	Monitoring conducted
III	Restore and maintain the natural communities/habitats of the park	A	Complete a comprehensive floral and faunal survey and create/update the park's baseline plant and animal list.	1	Complete a comprehensive survey.	Survey Completed.
III	Restore and maintain the natural communities/habitats of the park	A	Complete a comprehensive floral and faunal survey and create/update the park's baseline plant and animal list.	2	Create a baseline plant and animal list.	List completed
III	Restore and maintain the natural communities/habitats of the park.	B	Within 10 years, have 250 acres of the park maintained within the optimum fire return interval.	3	Create 1.4 miles of perimeter firebreaks.	Number miles established.
III	Restore and maintain the natural communities/habitats of the park.	C	Conduct natural community/habitat improvement activities on 276 acres of sandhill natural community.	1	Mechanically and/or chemically treat off-site hardwoods in the 32 acres abandoned field in zones GBS-4, GBS-5 and GBS-6.	Plan developed/updated.

Goal (ST)	Details of Goal	Objective	Details of Objective	Action	Details of Action	Measures
III	Restore and maintain the natural communities/habitats of the park.	C	Conduct natural community/habitat improvement activities on 276 acres of sandhill natural community.	3	Mechanically and/or chemically treat 96 acres selected hardwoods adjacent to existing longleaf pines in zones GBS-1w, GBS-1e and GBS-3.	Number acres treated.
IV	Maintain, improve or restore imperiled species populations and habitats in the park.	A	Develop baseline imperiled species occurrence inventory list for plants and animals.	1	Develop baseline imperiled species occurrence inventory list for plants and animals.	List developed.
IV	Maintain, improve or restore imperiled species populations and habitats in the park.	B	Monitor and document 4 selected imperiled animal species in the park.	1	Develop monitoring protocols for 1 selected imperiled animal species, the West Indian manatee.	Number protocols developed.
V	Remove exotic and invasive plants and animals from the park and conduct needed maintenance-control.	A	Annually treat all infested acres of exotic plant species in the park.	3	Develop a specific plan to monitor, track and eradicate non-native SAV (hydrilla and Indian swamp weed) from the park's spring systems.	Plan implemented.
VI	Protect, preserve and maintain the cultural resources of the park.	A	Assess and evaluate the physical condition of 1 cultural site in the park.	1	Complete DRP condition assessment of site GI21.	Assessment complete.
VI	Protect, preserve and maintain the cultural resources of the park.	B	Compile reliable documentation for all recorded historic and archaeological sites.	1	Ensure all known archaeological sites have been recorded with the FMSF. Any new sites discovered will be recorded with the FMSF.	Number sites recorded or updated.

Goal (ST)	Details of Goal	Objective	Details of Objective	Action	Details of Action	Measures
VI	Protect, preserve and maintain the cultural resources of the park.	B	Compile reliable documentation for all recorded historic and archaeological sites.	2	Complete an archaeological sensitivity model for the park.	Probability Map completed.
VI	Protect, preserve and maintain the cultural resources of the park.	B	Compile reliable documentation for all recorded historic and archaeological sites.	3	Conduct a Phase 1 survey in advance of any ground disturbance.	Survey completed.
VI	Protect, preserve and maintain the cultural resources of the park.	B	Compile reliable documentation for all recorded historic and archaeological sites.	5	Develop and adopt a Scope of Collections Statement that indicates the park will not maintain a collection.	Report completed.
VI	Protect, preserve and maintain the cultural resources of the park.	C	Bring 1 of 2 recorded cultural resources into good condition.	1	Develop a protection and treatment plan for site GI21.	Plan completed.

Source: Florida DEP, Office of Environmental Services, Revised Sept_2019_MWE.

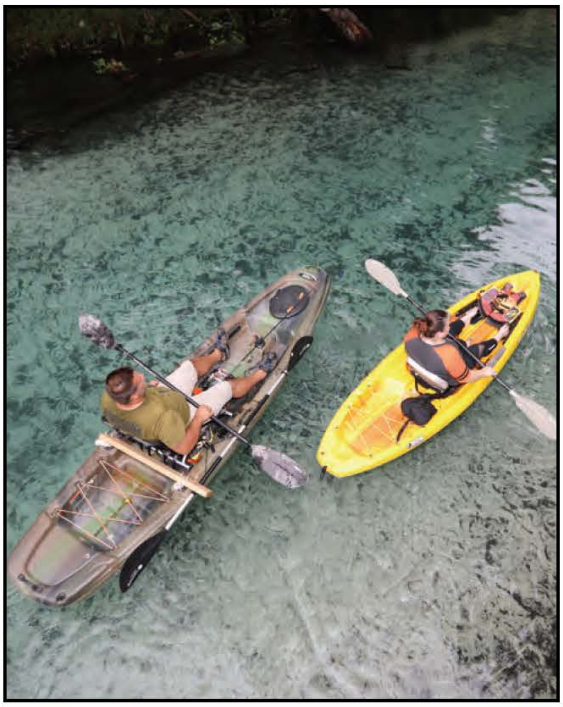
RUTH B. KIRBY GILCHRIST BLUE SPRINGS STATE PARK UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Florida's newest state park, Gilchrist Blue Springs is well-known for outstanding water clarity of its springs and renowned for its support of a diversity of wildlife species including turtles, fish and invertebrates.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

- Protects six known springs and 1.5 miles of the Santa Fe River
- Visitors can enjoy camping, paddling, swimming, and hiking.
- Became Florida's official 175th state park October of 2017
- The park's 69,141 annual visitors contributed over $5 million in direct economic impact.
- Located in Gilchrist County
- Acreage: 402.42 acres
- Lease/Management Agreement Number(s): 4814
- Use: Single Use
- Designated Land Use: Public outdoor recreation and conservation is the designated single use of the property.
- Agency: Department of Environmental Protection Divison of Recreation and Parks
- Responsbility: Public Outdoor Recreation and Conservation
- Sublease: None
- Encumbrances: See Appendix 1 for details
- Type of Acquisition(s): Fee-simple, warranty deed with acquisition funded through the Florida Forever program, see Appendix 1 for details.

Natural Communities	Acres
Alluvial Forest	30.45
Bottomland Forest	37.07
Basin Swamp	0.20
Floodplain Swamp	24.19
Limestone Outcrop	0.07
Sandhill	177.37
Successional Hardwood Forest	40.30
Sinkhole	1.23
Sinkhole Lake	0.16
Upland Hardwood Forest	26.02
Abandoned Field/Pasture	31.57
Borrow Area	0.07
Developed	23.41
Utility Corridor	6.33



RUTH B. KIRBY GILCHRIST BLUE SPRINGS STATE PARK UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Hydrological Management

Goal: Protect water quality and quantity in the park, restore hydrology to the extent feasible and maintain the restored condition.

- Objective: Evaluate and mitigate impacts of soil erosion in the park.
- Objective: Conduct/obtain an assessment of the park's hydrological restoration needs.Therefore restoring natural hydrological conditions and functions to approximately 2 acres of spring-run stream natural community.

NATURAL COMMUNITIES MANAGEMENT

Goal: Restore and maintain the natural communities/habitats of the park.

- Objective: Complete a comprehensive floral and faunal survey and create/update the park's baseline plant and animal list.
- Objective: Within 10 years, have 250 acres of the park maintained within the optimum fire return interval.
- Objective: Conduct natural community/habitat improvement activities on 276 acres of sandhill natural community.

IMPERILED SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Goal: Maintain, improve, or restore imperiled species populations and habitats in the park.

- Objective: Develop/update baseline imperiled species occurrence inventory lists for plants and animals.
- Objective: Monitor and document 3 selected imperiled animal species in the park.
- Objective: Monitor and document 1 selected imperiled plant species in the park.

RUTH B. KIRBY GILCHRIST BLUE SPRINGS STATE PARK UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXOTIC SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Goal: Remove exotic and invasive plants and animals from the park and conduct needed maintenance control.

- Objective: Annually treat all infested acres of exotic plant species in the park.
- Objective: Implement control measures on 1 exotic animal species in the park.
- Objective: Monitor and document 1 selected imperiled plant species in the park.

CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Goal: Protect, preserve and maintain the cultural resources of the park.

- Objective: Assess and evaluate the physical condition of 1 cultural site in the park.
- Objective: Compile reliable documentation for all recorded historic and archaeological resources.
- Objective: Bring 1 of 2 recorded cultural resources into good condition.

LAND USE AND RECREATION

Goal: Provide public access and recreational opportunities in the park.

- Objective: Provide and develop public access through appropriate resource-based recreational activities.

  New and improved recreational opportunities and facilities have been proposed that are appropriate for this park and consistent with the DRP mission. These include:

  - Redesign and redevelopment of the main day use area, including a new bathhouse, picnic pavilions, and improved parking
  - Hiking trail development
  - New canoe/kayak launch
  - New boardwalk
  - New 40-Site Family Campground (30 traditional campsites, 10 tent-only sites, bathhouse)
  - New park entrance drive and ranger station
  - New support facilities including a shop, staff residence, and wastewater treatment plant

RUTH B. KIRBY GILCHRIST BLUE SPRINGS STATE PARK UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ACQUISITION NEEDS/ACREAGE

Approximately 478 acres of land are identified within the optimum boundary for Ruth B. Kirby Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park (see Optimum Boundary Map, page 101). Parcels that lie to the east of the park have been included to enhance protection the Santa Fe River floodplain, two additional named springs, and to provide a greenway connection between Gilchrist Blue Springs and Poe Springs County Park (Alachua County).

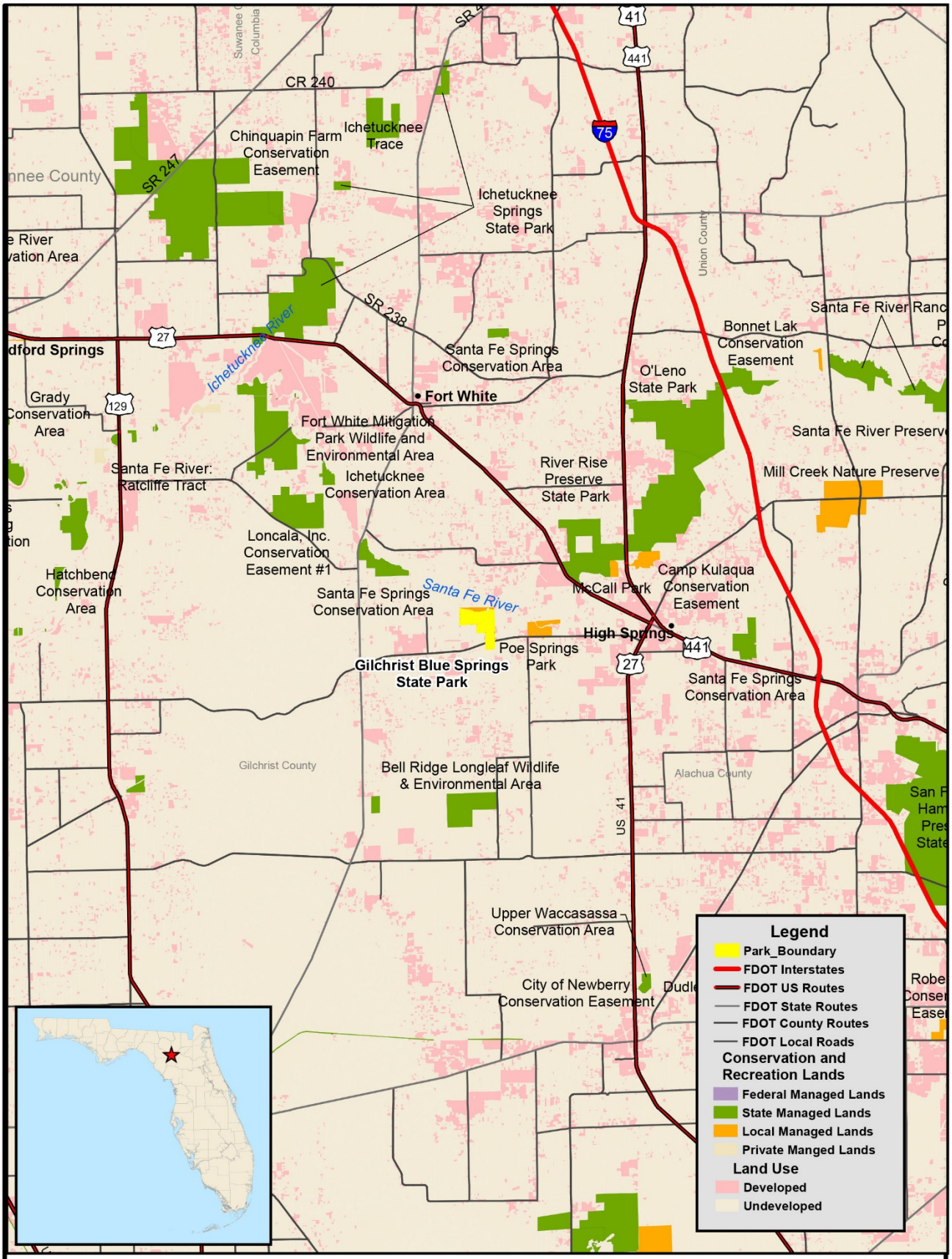
Additional parcels along the park's eastern boundary that are under single ownership have also been included. Digital elevation models indicated that the largest of these parcels contains an extensive area of floodplain and potential karst features. These parcels, as well as an additional property identified to the park's southwest, would buffer the park from potential future development and provide enhanced floodplain and springshed

SURPLUS LANDS/ACREAGE

No lands are considered surplus to the needs of the park.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

DRP provided an opportunity for public input by conducting two public workshops and an Advisory Group meeting to present the draft management plan to the public. These meetings were held on October 23 and 24, 2019, respectively. Meeting notices were published in the Florida Administrative Register, 10/14/2019, Volume 45, Number 200, included on the Department Internet Calendar, posted in clear view at the park, and promoted locally. The purpose of the Advisory Group meeting is to provide the Advisory Group members an opportunity to discuss the draft management plan (see Appendix 2).


CR 240
Chinquapin Farm Conservation Easement
Ichetucknee Trace
Ichetucknee Springs State Park
SR 247
SR 238
Ichetucknee River
Santa Fe Springs Conservation Area
Fort White
Fort White Mitigation Park Wildlife and Environmental Area
Ichetucknee Conservation Area
Santa Fe River: Ratcliffe Tract
Grady Conservation Area
Loncala, Inc. Conservation Easement #1
Hatchbend Conservation Area
Santa Fe Springs Conservation Area
Santa Fe River
Poe Springs Park
Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park
River Rise Preserve State Park
O'Leno State Park
McCall Park
Camp Kulaqua Conservation Easement
High Springs
Bonnet Lak Conservation Easement
Santa Fe River Preserve
Mill Creek Nature Preserve
Santa Fe Springs Conservation Area
Gilchrist County
Bell Ridge Longleaf Wildlife & Environmental Area
Alachua County
Union County
Upper Waccasassa Conservation Area
City of Newberry Conservation Easement
US 41
Legend
Park_Boundary
FDOT Interstates
FDOT US Routes
FDOT State Routes
FDOT County Routes
FDOT Local Roads
Conservation and Recreation Lands
Federal Managed Lands
State Managed Lands
Local Managed Lands
Private Manged Lands
Land Use
Developed
Undeveloped
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GILCHRIST BLUE SPRINGS
STATE PARK
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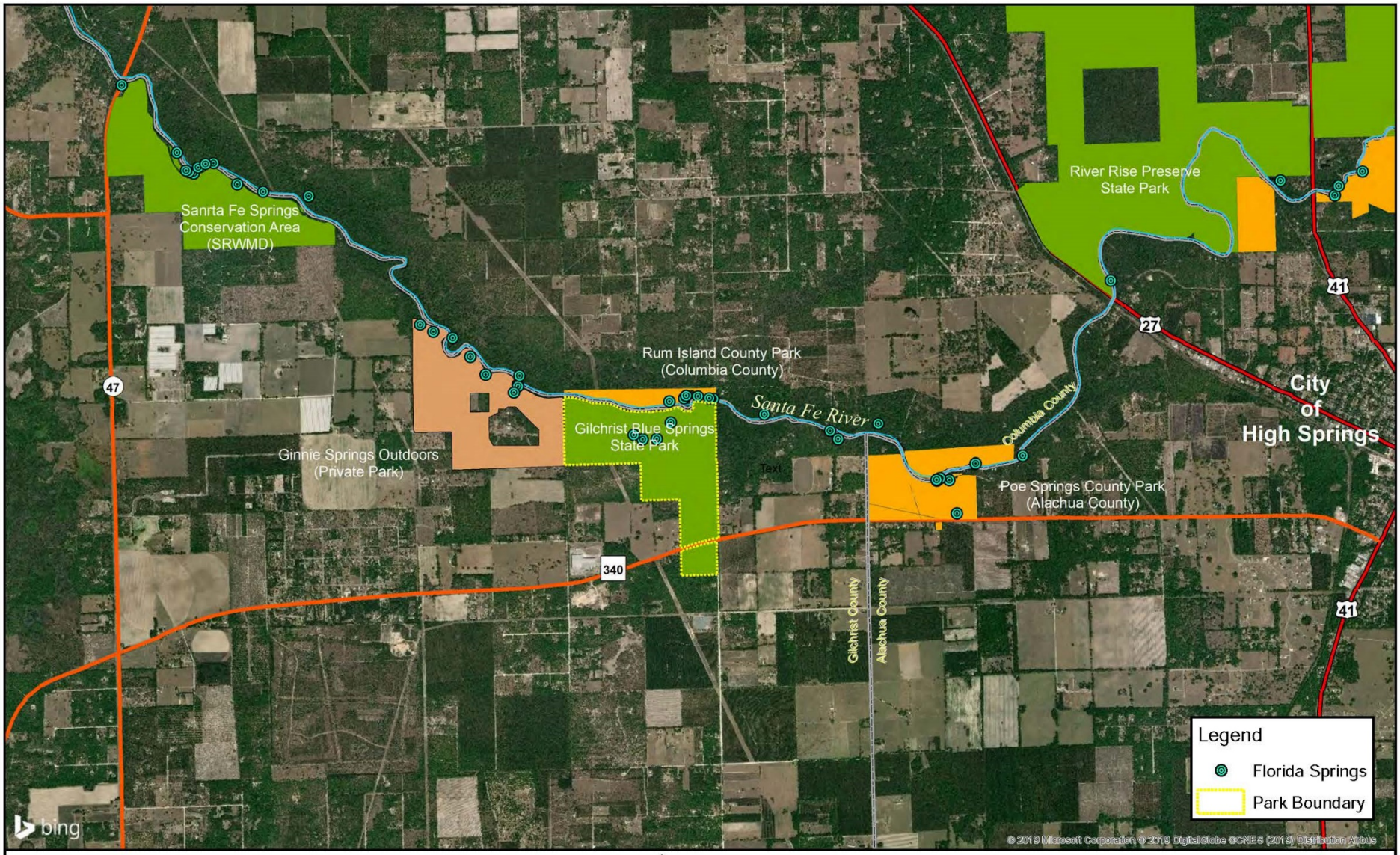
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks
VICINITY MAP



RUTH B. KIRBY
GILCHRIST BLUE SPRINGS STATE PARK

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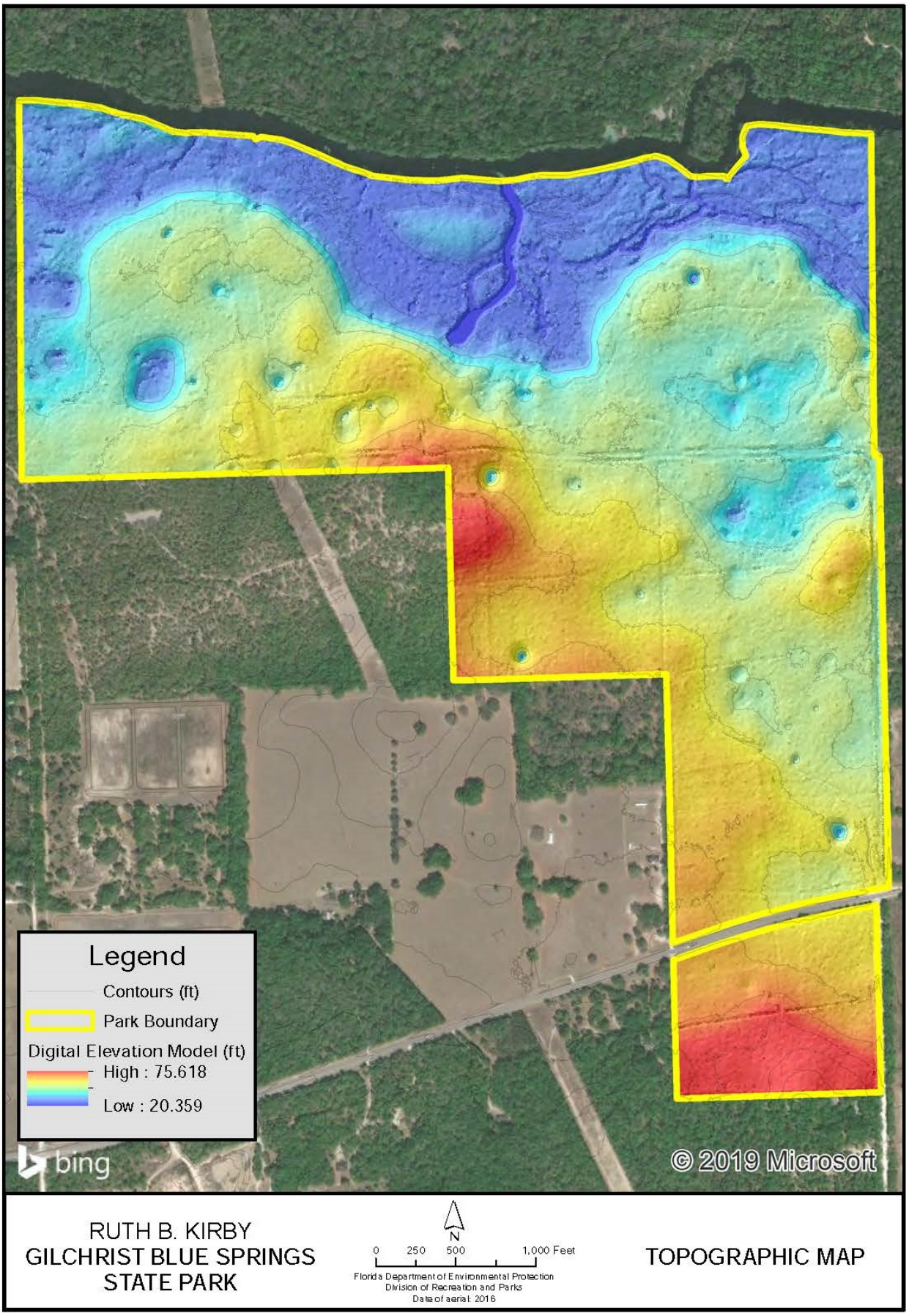
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks
Date of aerial: 2019

REFERENCE MAP


Legend
Contours (ft)
Park Boundary
Digital Elevation Model (ft)
High : 75.618
Low : 20.359
bing
© 2019 Microsoft
RUTH B. KIRBY
GILCHRIST BLUE SPRINGS
STATE PARK
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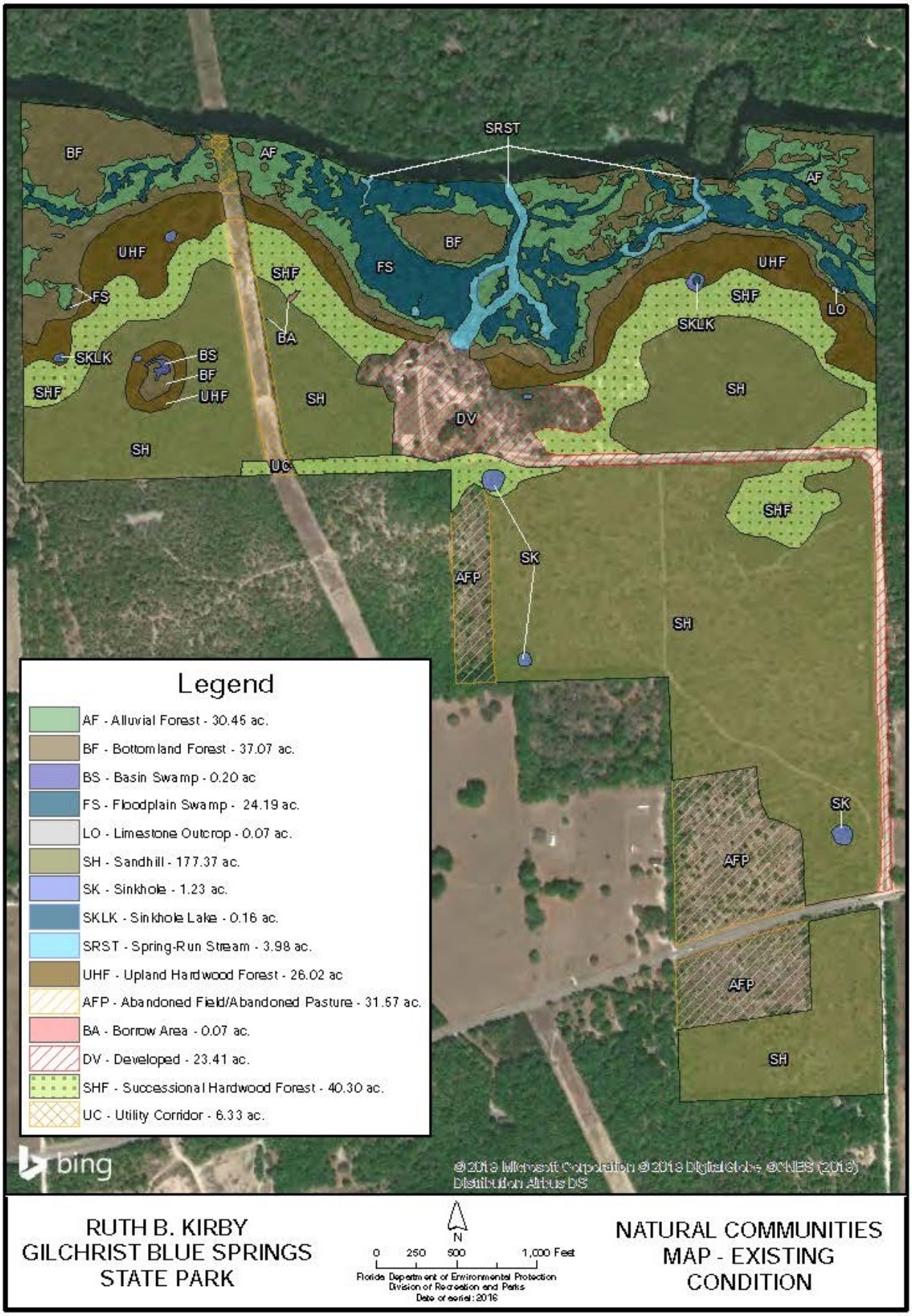
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks
Date of aerial: 2016
TOPOGRAPHIC MAP


SRST
BF
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AFP
Legend
AF - Alluvial Forest - 30.46 ac.
BF - Bottomland Forest - 37.07 ac.
BS - Basin Swamp - 0.20 ac
FS - Floodplain Swamp - 24.19 ac.
LO - Limestone Outcrop - 0.07 ac.
SH - Sandhill - 177.37 ac.
SK - Sinkhole - 1.23 ac.
SKLK - Sinkhole Lake - 0.16 ac.
SRST - Spring-Run Stream - 3.98 ac.
UHF - Upland Hardwood Forest - 26.02 ac
AFP - Abandoned Field/Abandoned Pasture - 31.57 ac.
BA - Borrow Area - 0.07 ac.
DV - Developed - 23.41 ac.
SHF - Successional Hardwood Forest - 40.30 ac.
UC - Utility Corridor - 6.33 ac.
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RUTH B. KIRBY
GILCHRIST BLUE SPRINGS
STATE PARK
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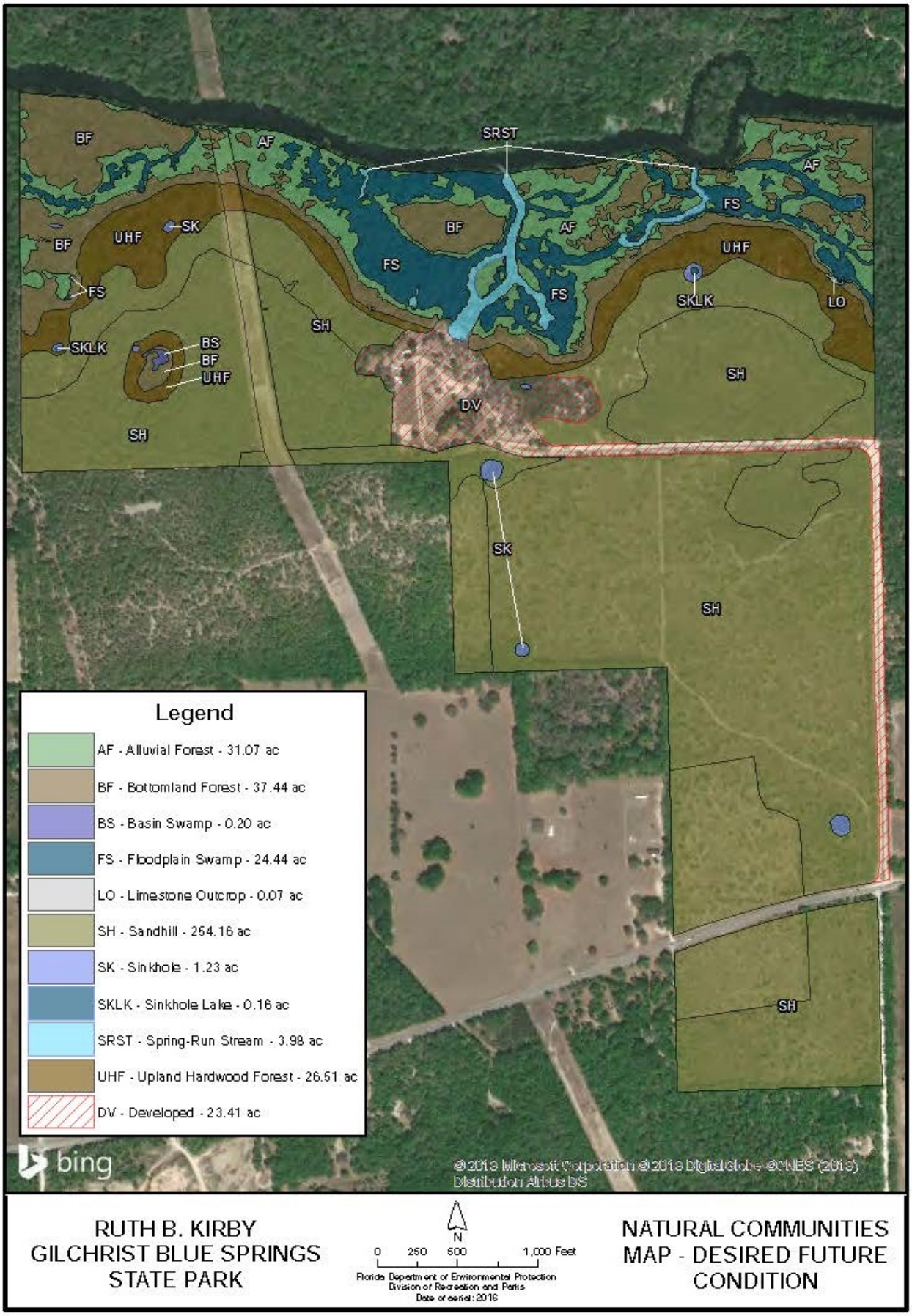
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks
Date of aerial: 2016
NATURAL COMMUNITIES
MAP - EXISTING
CONDITION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Legend
AF - Alluvial Forest - 31.07 ac
BF - Bottomland Forest - 37.44 ac
BS - Basin Swamp - 0.20 ac
FS - Floodplain Swamp - 24.44 ac
LO - Limestone Outcrop - 0.07 ac
SH - Sandhill - 254.16 ac
SK - Sinkhole - 1.23 ac
SKLK - Sinkhole Lake - 0.16 ac
SRST - Spring-Run Stream - 3.98 ac
UHF - Upland Hardwood Forest - 26.51 ac
DV - Developed - 23.41 ac
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Distribution Airbus DS
RUTH B. KIRBY
GILCHRIST BLUE SPRINGS
STATE PARK
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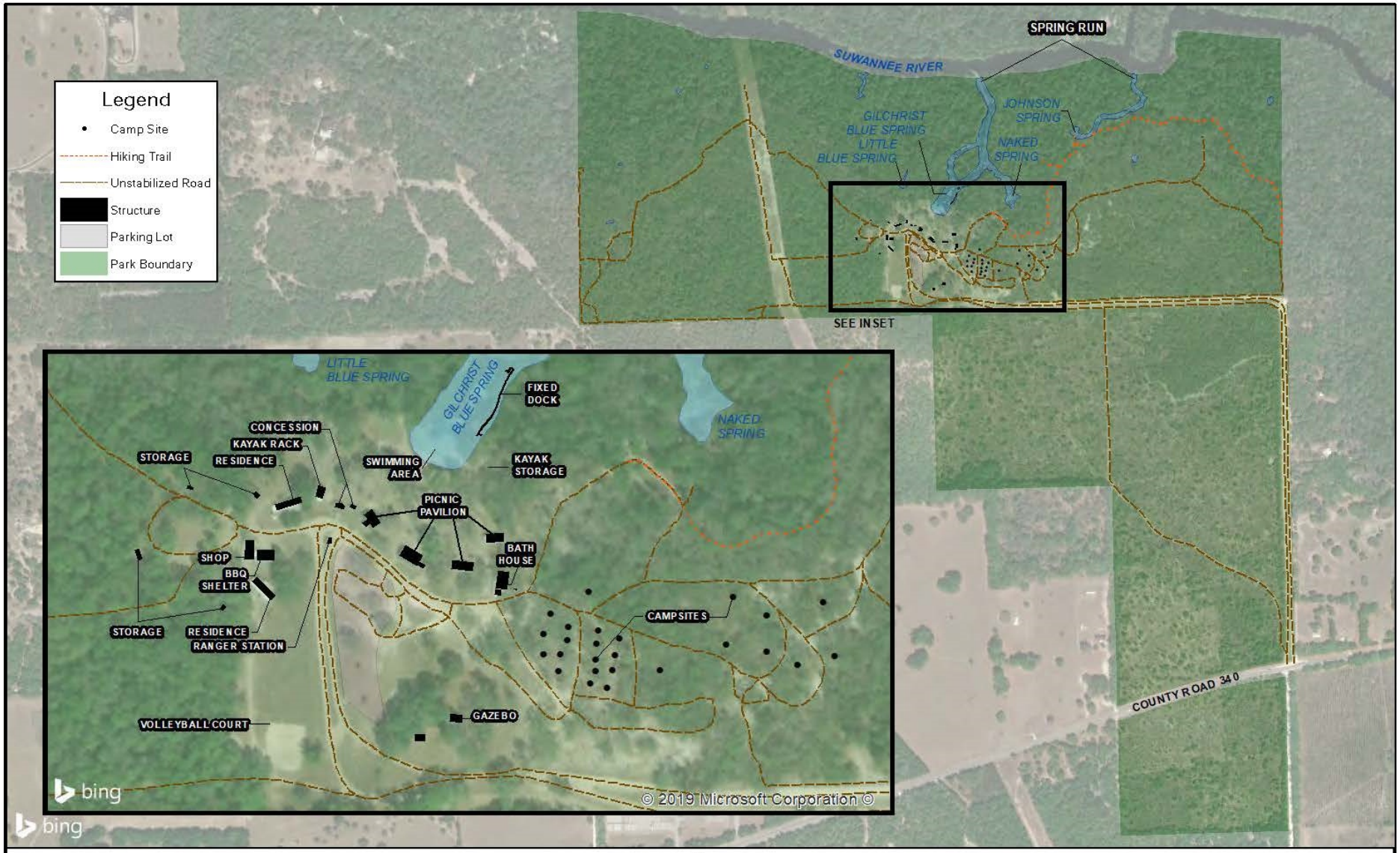
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks
Date of aerial: 2016
NATURAL COMMUNITIES
MAP - DESIRED FUTURE
CONDITION



RUTH B. KIRBY
GILCHRIST BLUE SPRINGS
STATE PARK

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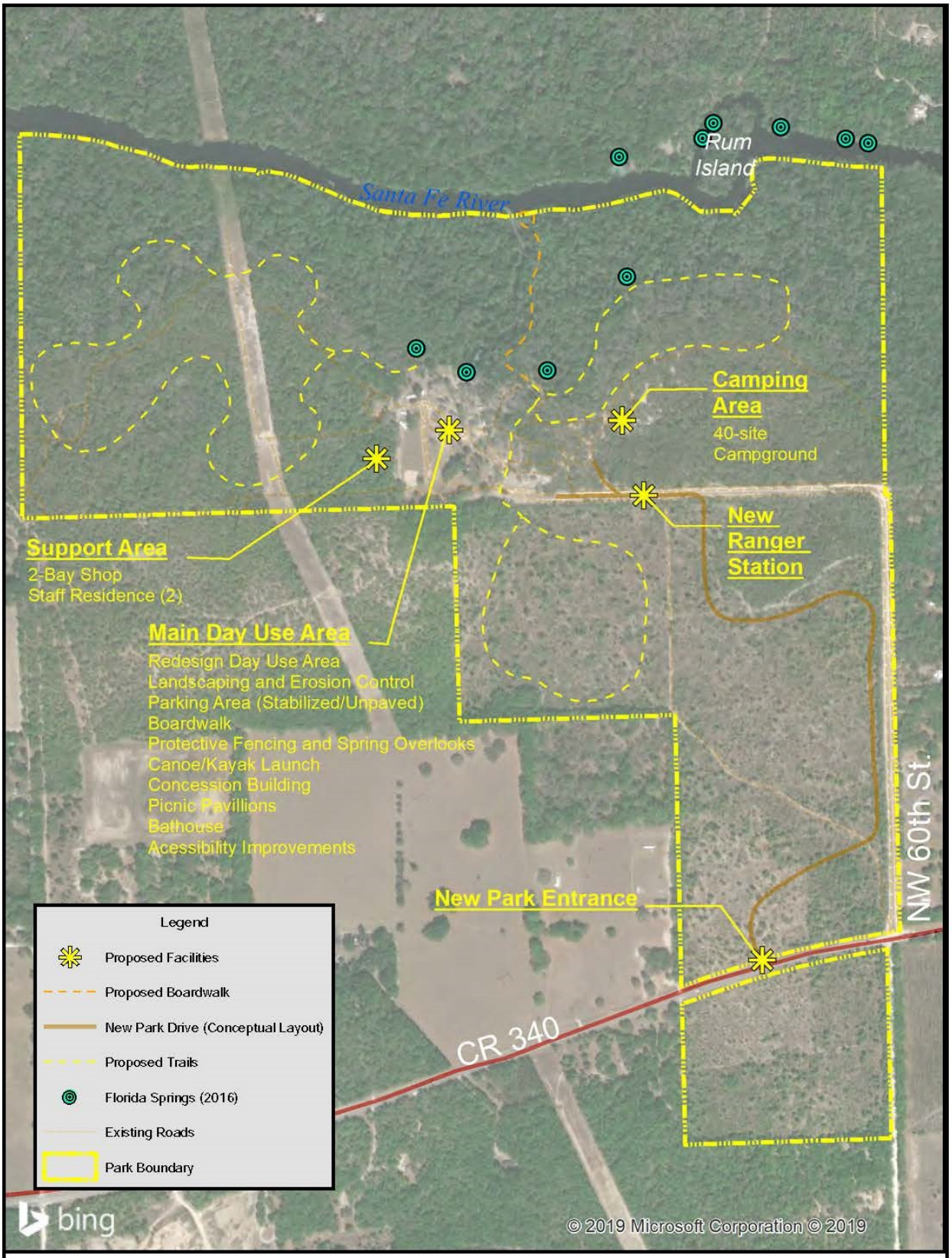
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks
Date of aerial: 2016

BASE MAP



GILCHRIST BLUE SPRINGS STATE PARK

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0 250 500 1,000 Feet

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

CONCEPTUAL LAND USE PLAN

RUTH B. KIRBY GILCHRIST BLUE SPRINGS
STATE PARK

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0 500 1,000 2,000 Feet
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks
Date of aerial: 2016

OPTIMUM BOUNDARY MAP