

ITEM 8:

Consider a 10-year update to the Janet Butterfield Brooks Wildlife and Environmental Area Management Plan (Lease No. 4594).

LOCATION:

Hernando County

APPLICANT:

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

DSL STAFF REMARKS:*Background*

The Janet Butterfield Brooks Wildlife and Environmental Area (JBBWEA) located in Hernando County encompasses approximately 319 acres. The Janet Butterfield Brooks Wildlife and Environmental Area (JBBWEA) is emblematic of some of the area's last tracts of older growth longleaf pine sandhill forests and hardwood hammocks. The JBBWEA is part of the southernmost extent of the unique Annutteliga Hammock. This feature is a vast mix of mesic hammock, upland hardwood forest, and bottomland forest that contains unique plant assemblages. The clay laden soils, karst topography with limestone at or near the soil surface, natural fire exclusion, and southern and northern limits of many plant species, all combine in this area of the state to form the Annutteliga Hammock. As such, it conserves and protects a remaining fragment of this ancient forested system ecotype providing habitat for a keystone sandhill species, the gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*) and many sandhill dwelling plants beneath the towering longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) trees. Donated by The Nature Conservancy to the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund of the State of Florida (Board of Trustees) and managed by FWC, the JBBWEA conserves habitat important for imperiled species that occur on the site such as the gopher tortoise and Southeastern American kestrel (*Falco sparverius paulus*) and provides opportunities for research and environmental education on the importance of the conservation of these species.

Public access to the JBBWEA is restricted to FWC staff for management purposes in accordance with the restrictions in the deed of donation of the property to the state. Recreational opportunities are limited to guided educational tours with approval and guidance from FWC staff. However, numerous other public conservation lands in proximity of the JBBWEA, such as the Chinsegut Wildlife and Environmental Area and the Chassahowitzka Wildlife Management Area, offer a wide variety of public outdoor fish- and wildlife-based recreational opportunities.

Management Plan Overview

Through the services of the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI), FWC has mapped the natural and anthropogenic community types on JBBWEA. FNAI has identified and mapped a total of eight community types within the JBBWEA. The primary vegetative communities found within the JBBWEA are sandhill and upland hardwood forest.

The FWC has developed the Florida Landscape Assessment Model (FLAM) as a Geographic Information Systems-based assessment tool that incorporates a wide variety of landscape and wildlife species data. The FLAM evaluates the Florida landscape based upon important natural resources and habitat needs of wildlife to identify ecologically significant lands in the state, and

to assess the potential impacts of management and land-use changes. The FLAM was developed to provide technical assistance to various local, regional, state and federal agencies and entities interested in wildlife needs and conservation in order to: (1) determine ways to avoid or minimize project impacts by evaluating alternative placements, alignments and transportation corridors during early planning stages, (2) assess direct, secondary and cumulative impacts to habitat and wildlife resources, and (3) identify appropriate parcels for public land acquisition for wetland and upland habitat mitigation purposes. The FLAM ranks habitat from a 0-10; a rank of 10 being of greatest value. The FLAM (2020) indicates that the JBBWEA has a very high mean wildlife value of 8.7.

The Division of Historical Resources observations are broken down into five categories: archeological sites, resource groups, historical structures, historic bridges and historic cemeteries. The Florida Master Site File indicates there is one cultural resource located on the area. The FWC will submit subsequently located historic sites for inclusion in their Master Site File.

The Florida Legislature requires that all land management plans include long and short-term goals. These goals must be measurable objectives, and short-term goals must be achievable within a two-year planning period. Pursuant to section 253.034, Florida Statutes, the Division of State Lands began compiling the short-term goals from each land management plan approved since July 1, 2016. The management plan identified objectives under the following short-term goals: capital facilities and infrastructure, and cultural resources.

Public Involvement

The FWC conducted a Management Advisory Group Meeting on September 1, 2021, resulting in the top three ranked ideas:

- Maintain or improve natural communities into desired future conditions.
- Pending hydrological assessment, explore restoration opportunities.
- Continue to protect historical resources.

Results of this meeting were used by the FWC to develop management goals and objectives and to identify opportunities and strategies for inclusion in this Management Plan.

A public hearing, as required by section 259.032(10), F.S., was held on October 27, 2021. Questions and comments made by the public during the testimony period were regarding the management plan process, public access, and adjoining properties.

Surplus Lands

The evaluation of JBBWEA by FWC has determined that all portions of the area are being managed and operated for the original purposes of acquisition and remain integral to the continued conservation of important fish and wildlife resources, and continue to provide good fish and wildlife resource based public outdoor recreational opportunities. Therefore, no portion of the JBBWEA is recommended for potential surplus review.

State Land Management Review Team

The JBBWEA has not been subject to a review by an inter-agency land management review team.

DSL STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the management plan.

ARC RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE

APPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS: _____

DEFER

WITHDRAW

NOT APPROVE

OTHER: _____

LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lead Agency: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)
 Common Name of Property: Janet Butterfield Brooks Wildlife and Environmental Area (JBBWEA)
 Location: Hernando County, Florida
 Acreage Total: 319 acres
 Acreage Breakdown:

<u>Land Cover Classification</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Percent of Total Area</u>
Baygall	0.76	0.24%
Bottomland forest	4.35	1.36%
Depression marsh	1.30	0.41%
Mesic flatwoods	29.24	9.18%
Mesic hammock	57.51	18.06%
Road	10.81	3.39%
Sandhill	118.05	37.07%
Successional hardwood forest	17.02	5.35%
Upland hardwood forest	57.81	18.16%
Upland pine	21.57	6.77%

*GIS-calculated acreage for land cover classification varies slightly from actual total acreage.

Lease/Management Agreement No.: 4594 (Appendix 12.1)

Use: Single X Management Responsibilities: _____
 Multiple _ Agency FWC Responsibilities
LEAD, LESSEE (Wildlife and Environmental Area, resource protection, law enforcement)

Designated Land Use: Wildlife and Environmental Area

Sublease (s): None

Encumbrances List: None

Type Acquisition: Donation from The Nature Conservancy through FWC's Fish and Wildlife Habitat Program

Unique Features: Natural: Natural communities including sandhill and upland hardwood forest.

Archaeological/Historical: One documented within the JBBWEA.

Management Needs: Habitat restoration and improvement; hydrological preservation and restoration; invasive species maintenance and control; imperiled species habitat maintenance, enhancement, and restoration.

Acquisition Needs/Acreage: 585 acres FWC Additions and Inholdings list; 8,796 acres remaining in the Annettliga Hammock Florida Forever Project (Figure 12).

Surplus Lands/Acreage: None

Public Involvement: Management Advisory Group consensus building meeting and Public Hearing (Appendix 12.2 and 12.3)

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ARC Approval Date _____ BTIITF Approval Date: _____

Comments: _____

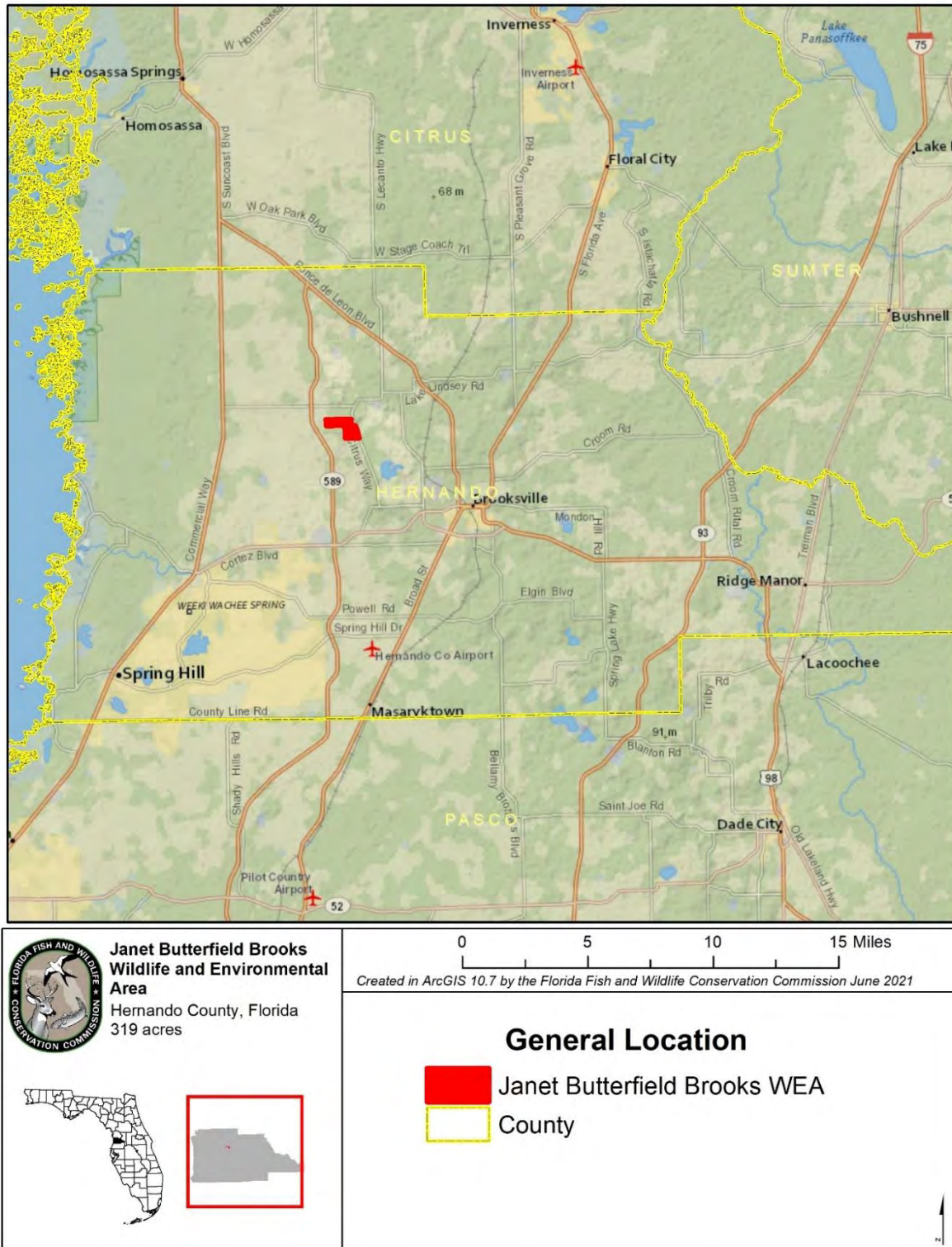


Figure 1. General Location of the JBBWEA

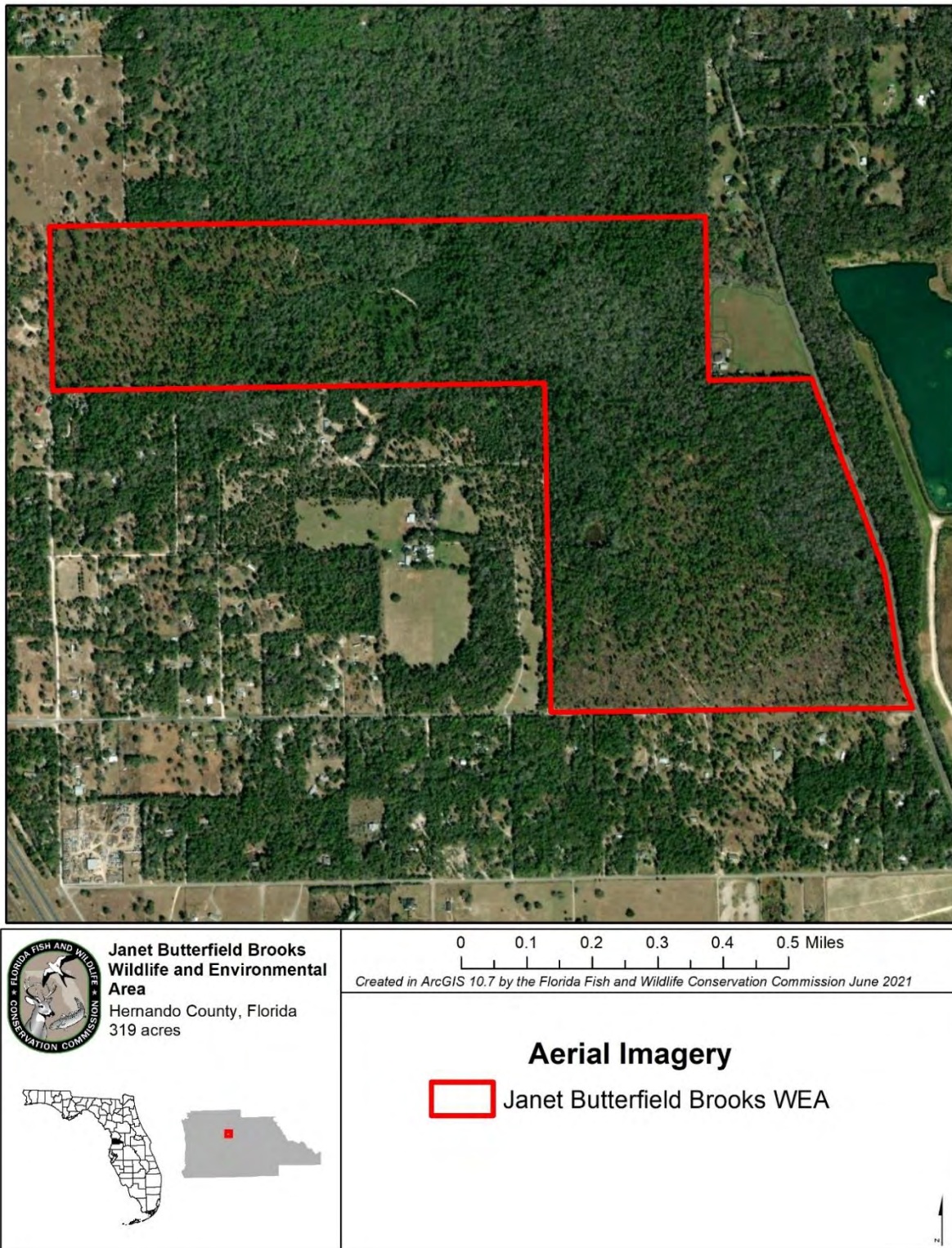


Figure 2. The JBBWEA Boundary and Aerial Imagery

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Management Plan

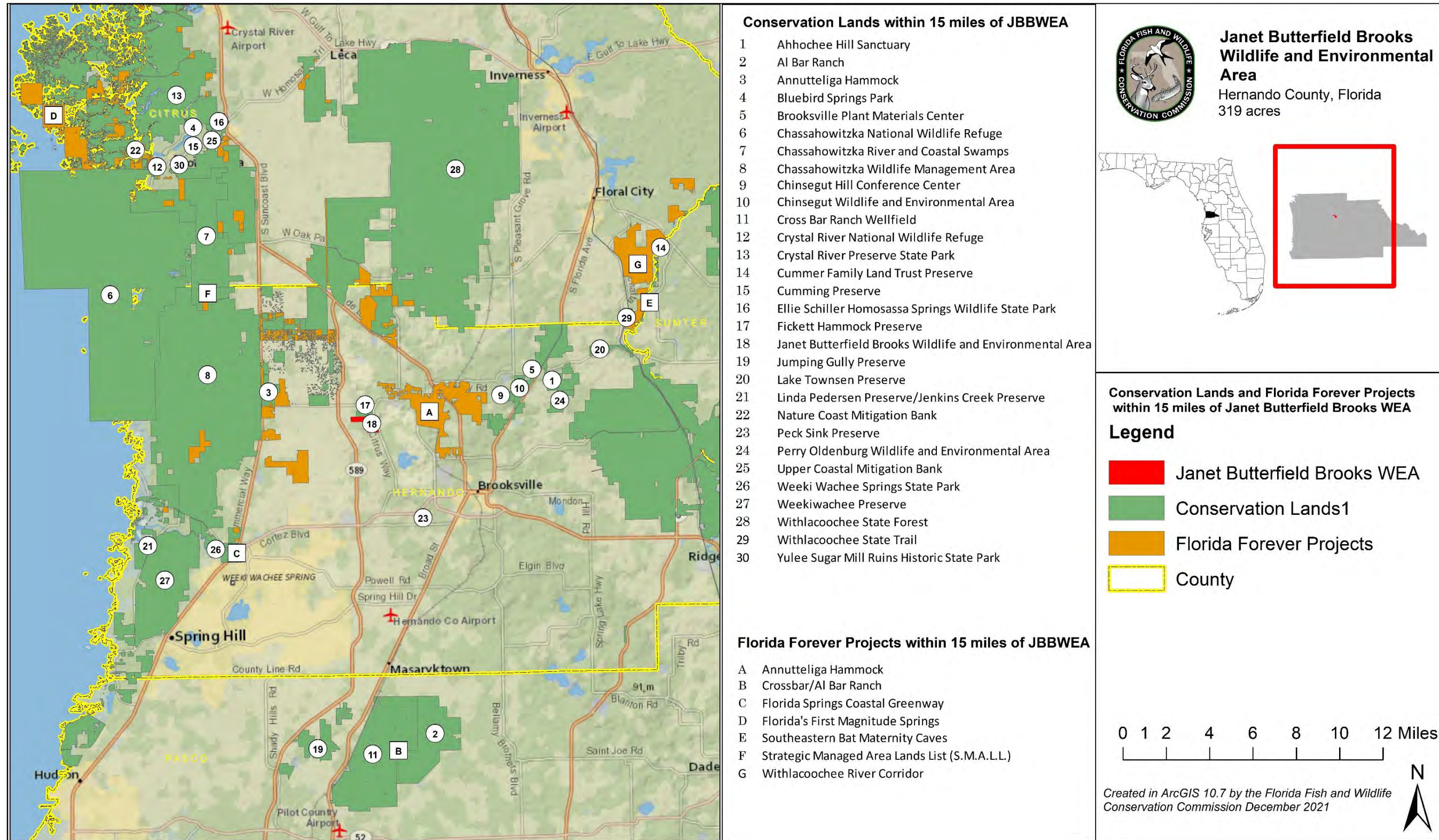


Figure 4. Nearby Conservation Lands and Florida Forever Projects

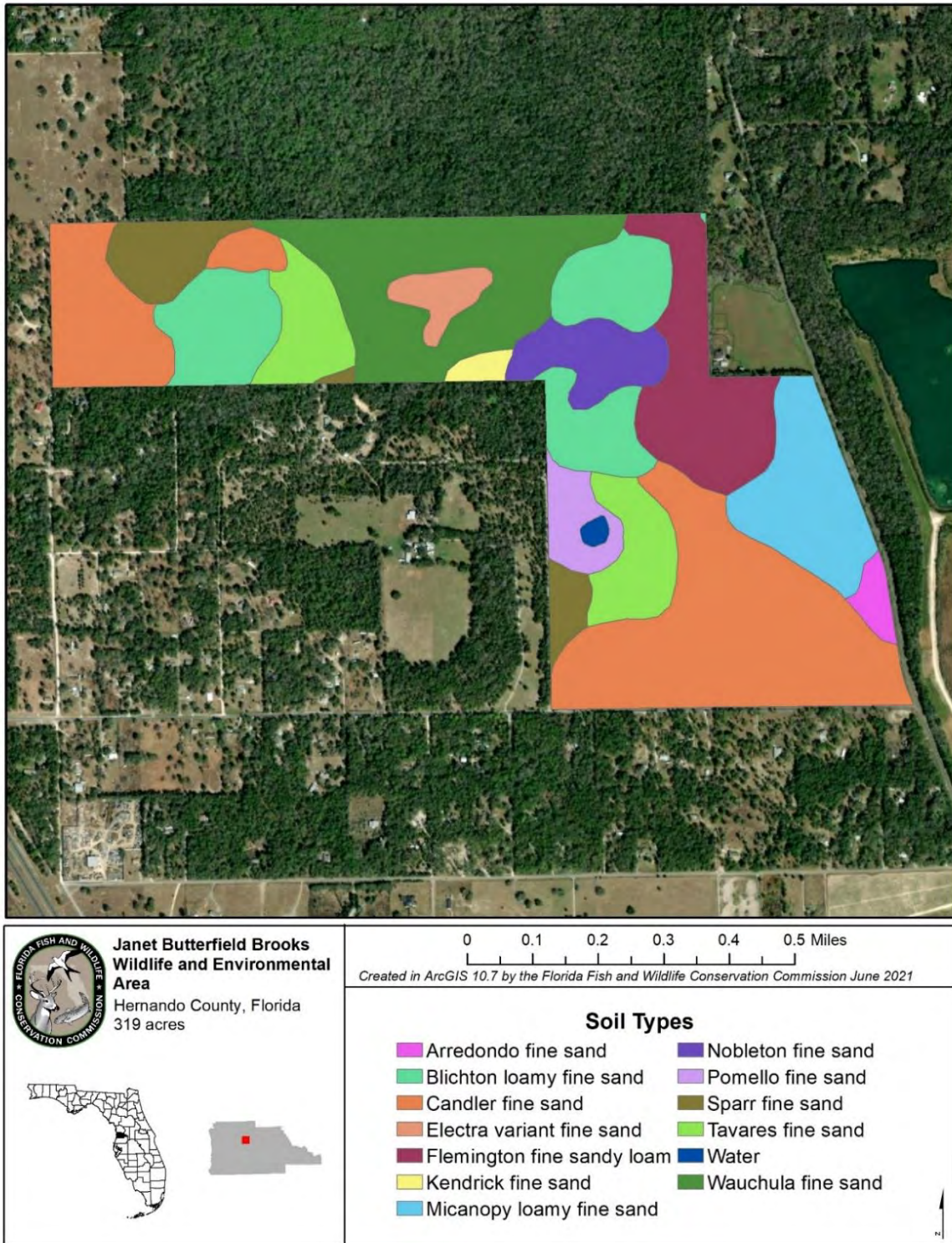


Figure 5. The JBBWEA Soil Types

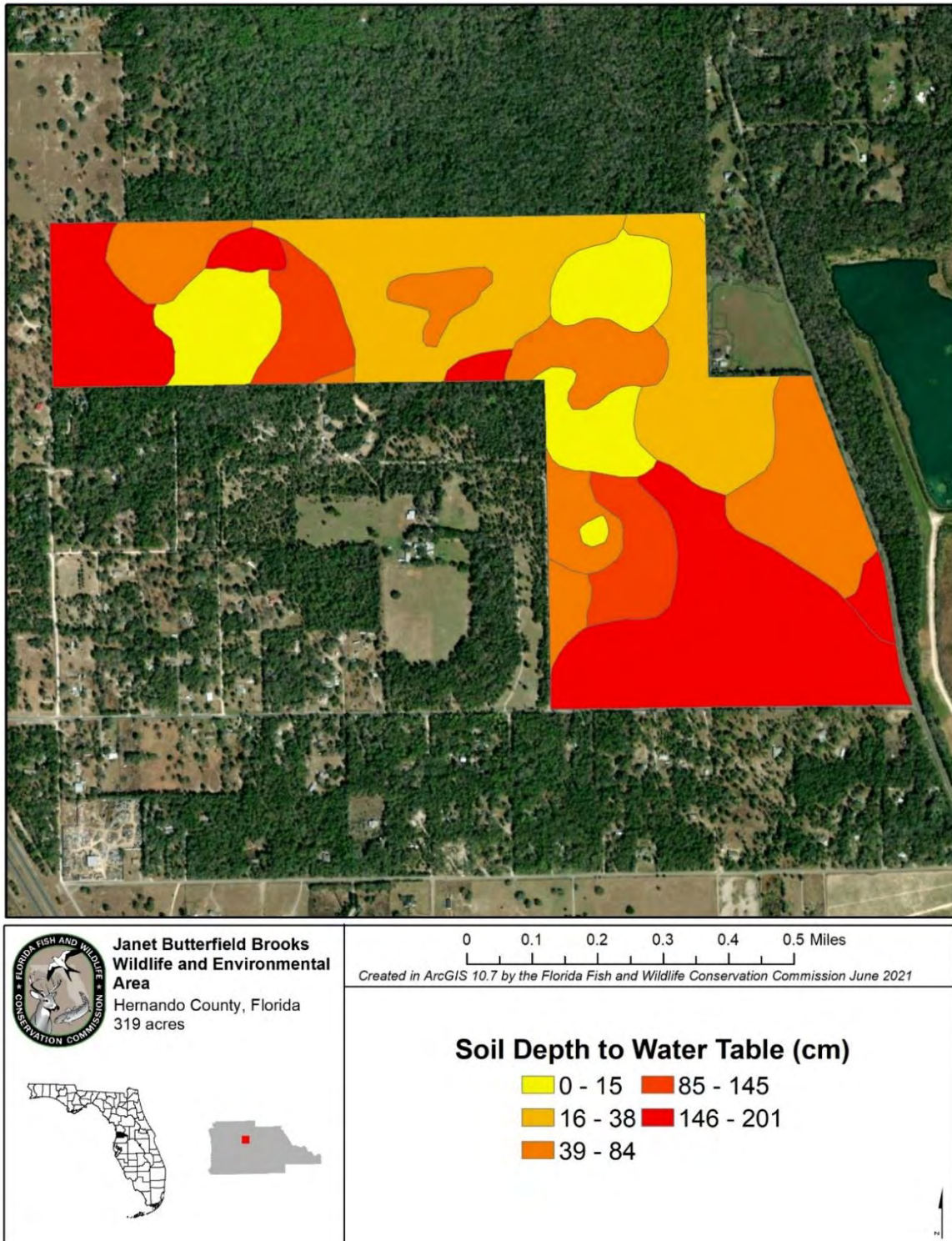


Figure 6. The JBBWEA Soil Depth to Water Table (cm)

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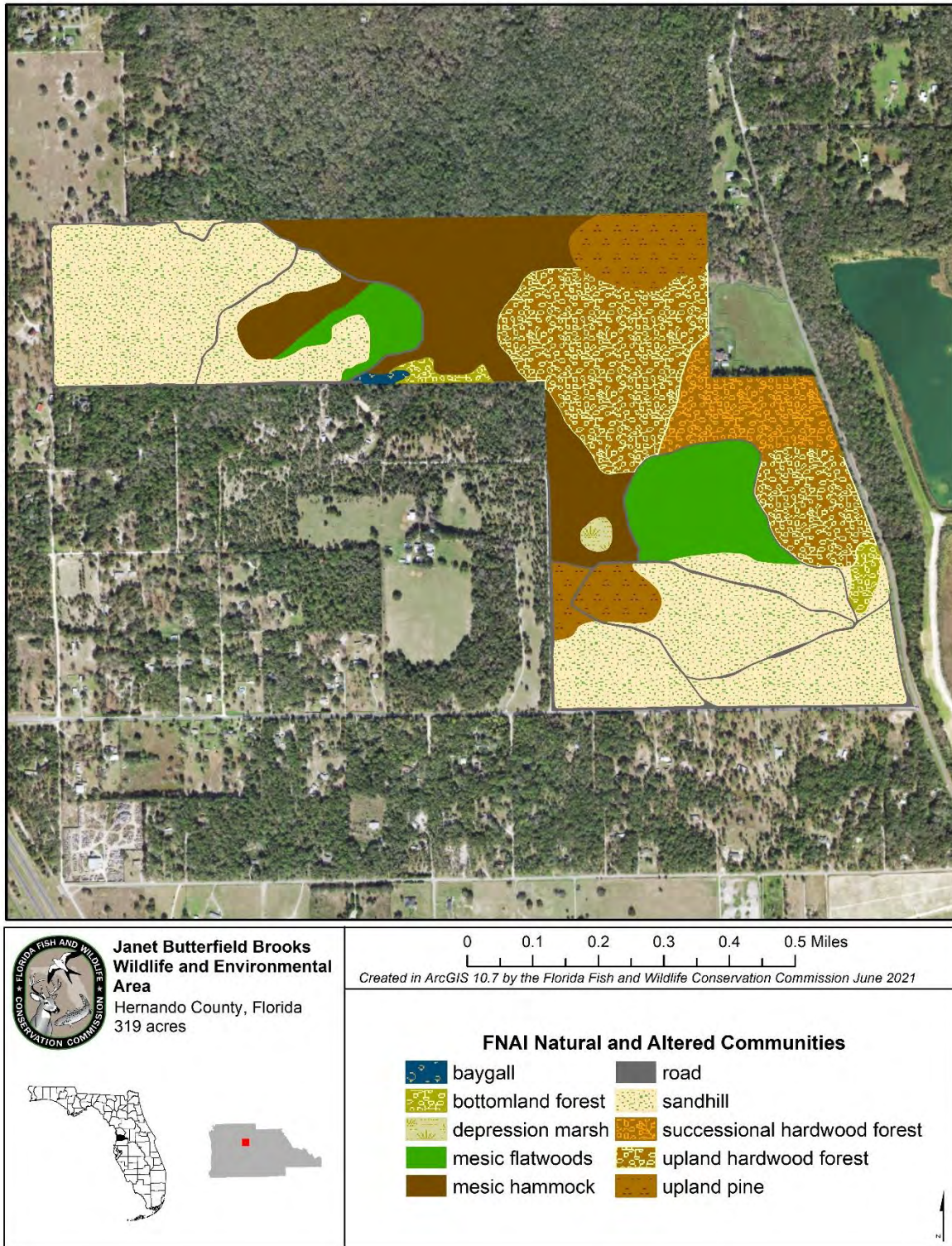


Figure 7. FNAI Natural and Altered Communities for the JBBWEA

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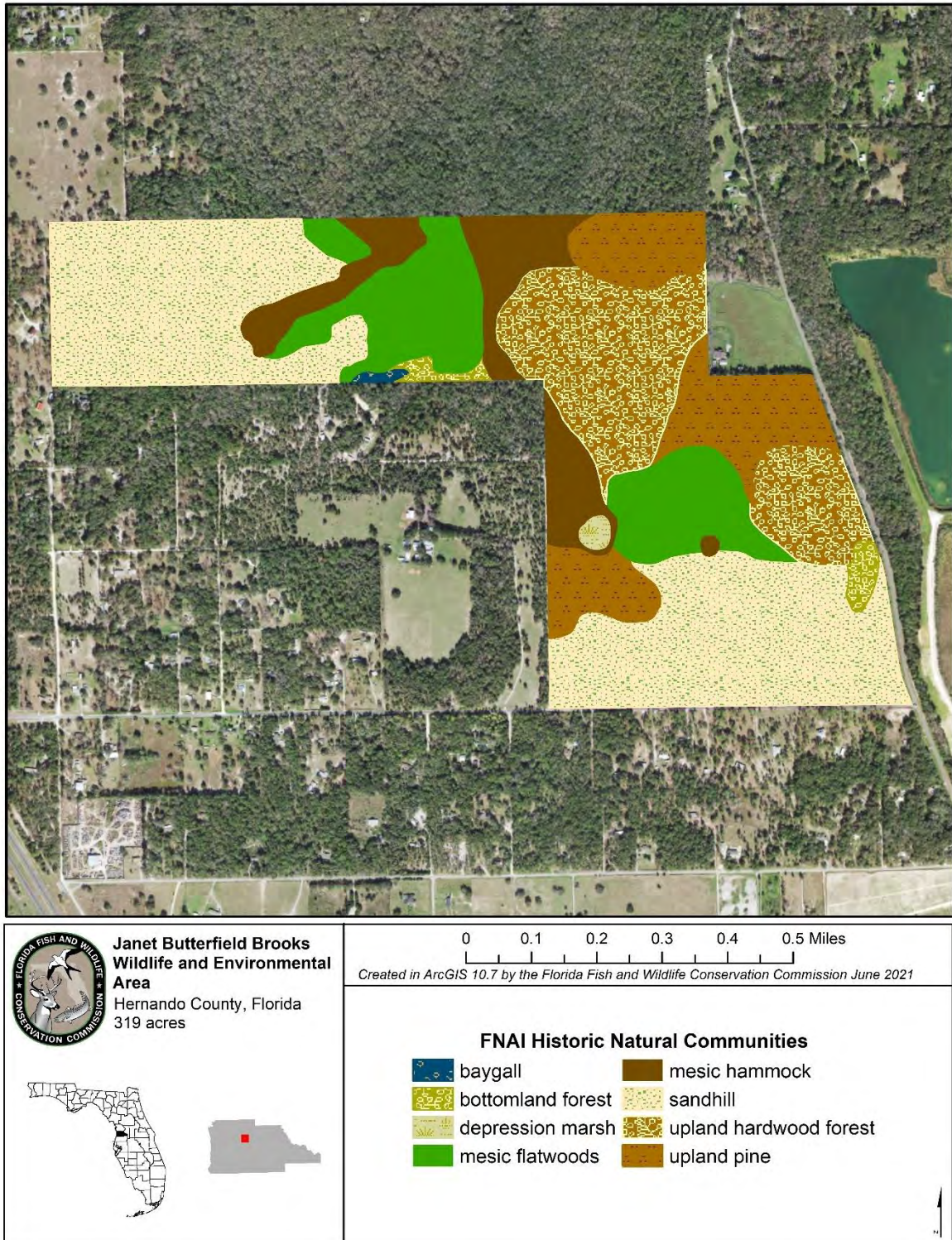


Figure 8. FNAI Historic Natural Communities for the JBBWEA

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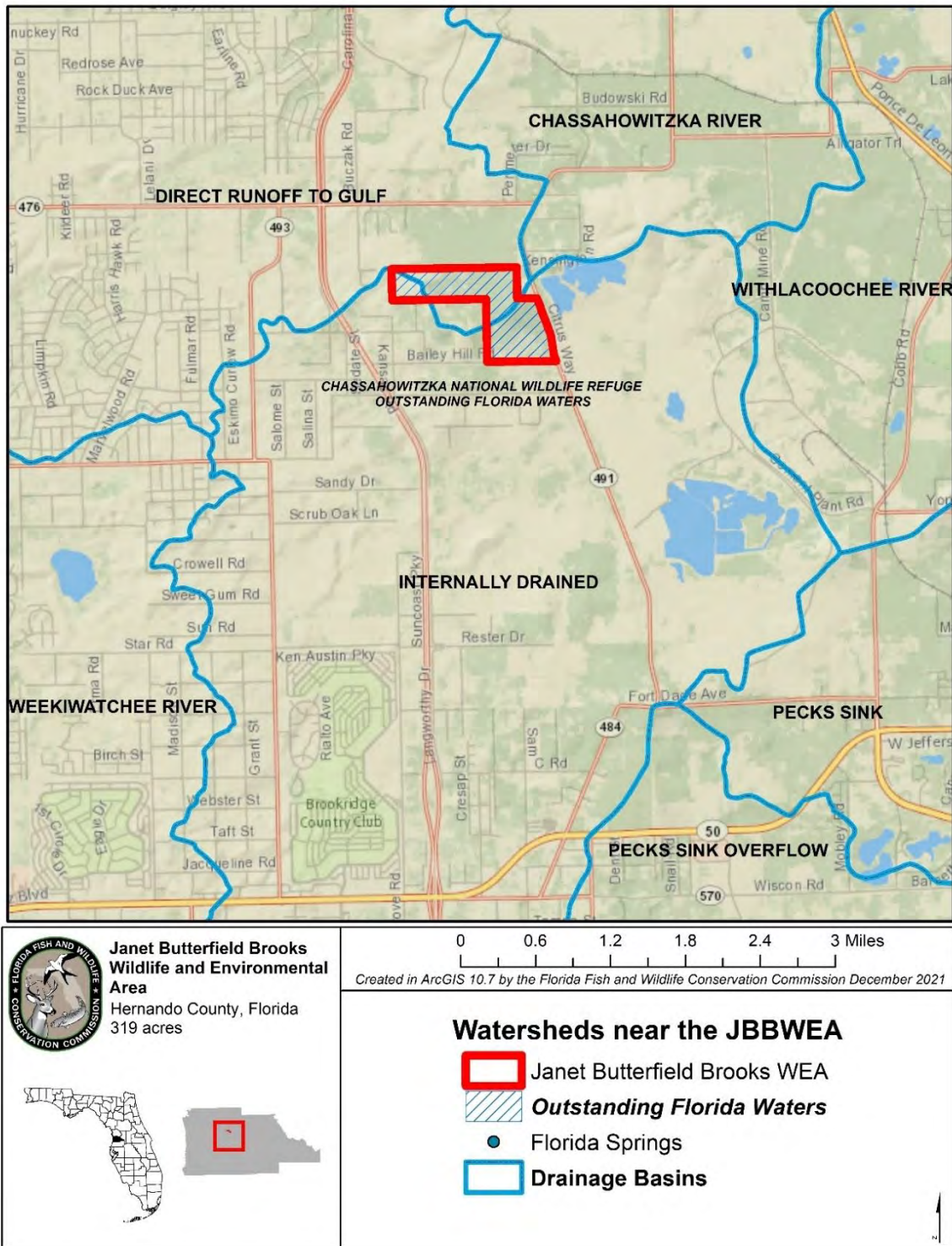


Figure 9. The JBBWEA Water Resources

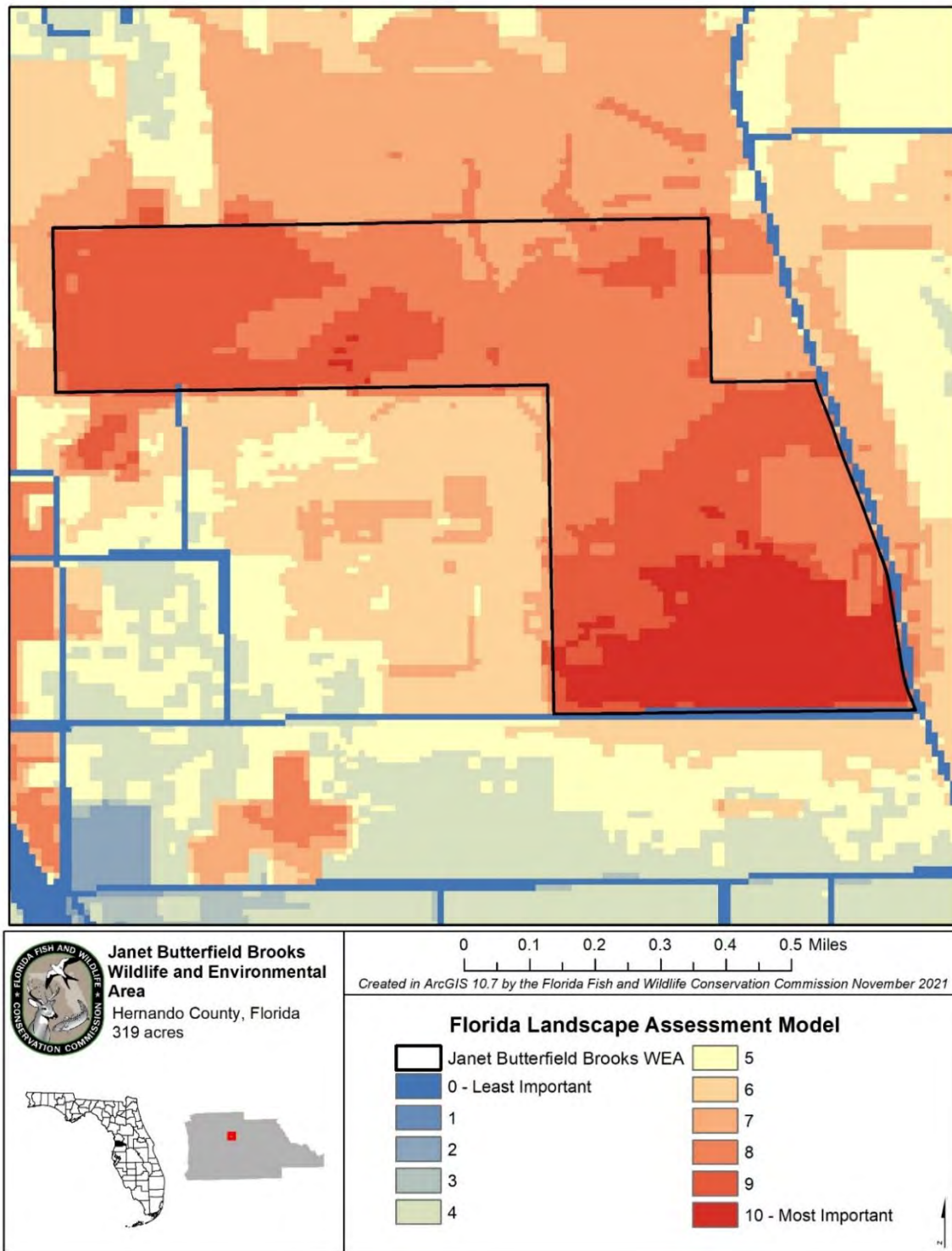


Figure 10. Florida Landscape Assessment Model

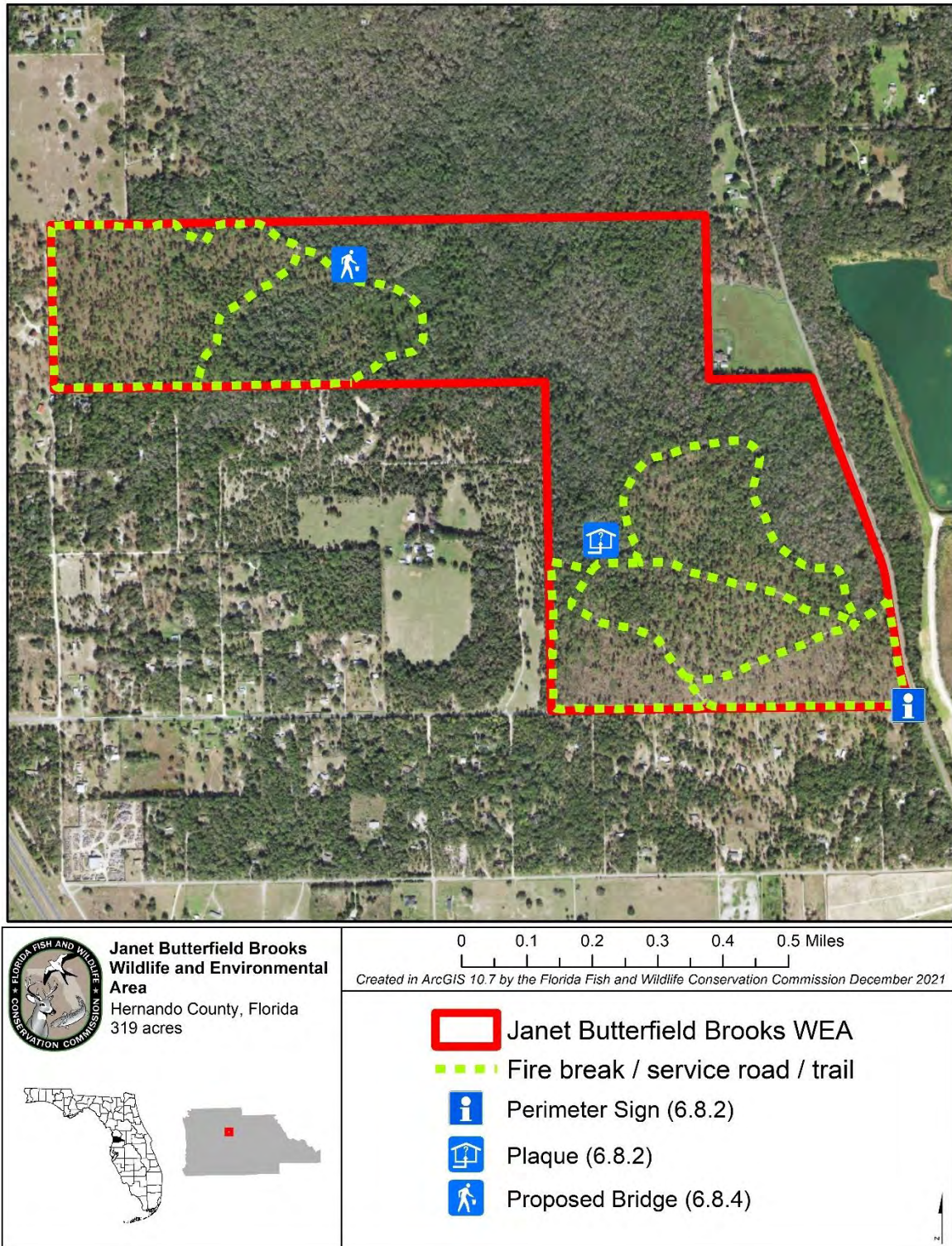


Figure 11. Facility Locations on the JBBWEA

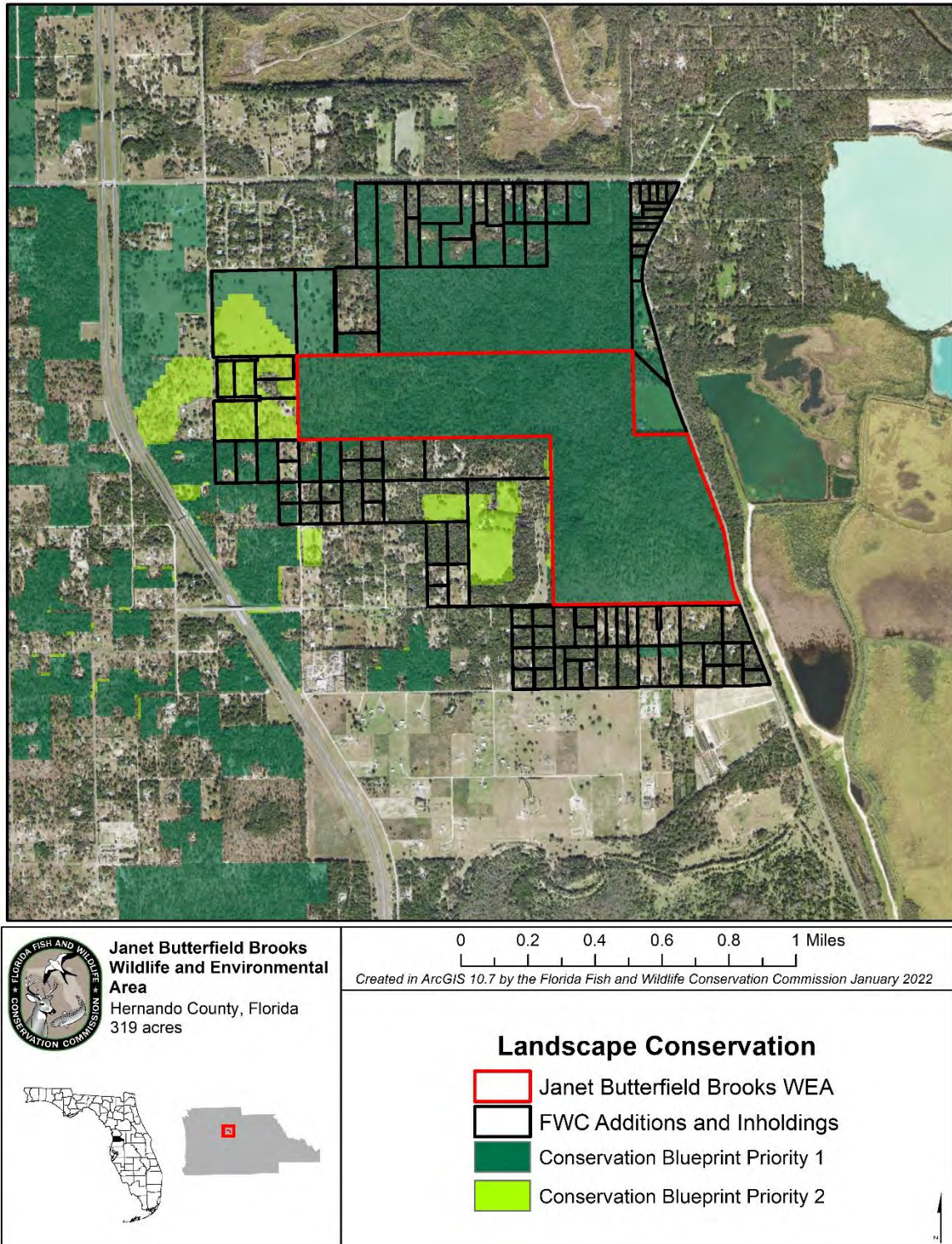


Figure 12. Additions and Inholdings and Conservation Blueprint

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